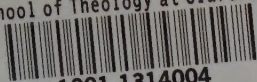


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The Gain of Life

W. C. COUPLAND



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THE GAIN OF LIFE.



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Illustrations

THE GAIN OF LIFE

And Other Essays

BY

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To
THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER
THESE ESSAYS
ARE
GRATEFULLY AND REVERENTLY
INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

IF I venture to describe the character of the contents of the present volume as philosophical, with a practical trend, it is with no thought of academical precision, but merely to announce to the reader in general terms what he may expect to find in the following pages. Negatively, the Essays aim neither at a literary treatment proper, nor at theoretical exposition. They are intended to stimulate thought on subjects of supreme importance, and indirectly to suggest lines of practical action. I have written, too, not for the specialist, but for the fairly educated public. Hence there is little attempt at scholastic accuracy, and none at the exhaustiveness of discussion needful in the

scientific treatise. At the same time I have not shirked ultimate references, seeing no reason why a *popular* should necessarily imply a *superficial* treatment. In these days, at all events, surely there are a large number who wish to see whither any high thought or particular world-view is likely to lead them, and who are competent to follow the course of speculative inquiry without having undergone a training in abstract Logic or pure Metaphysic in the schools. Moreover, we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that Conduct—the conduct of all men—is fast assuming the form of a practical problem, needing a peception of far wider and profounder relations than has hitherto been deemed profitable. The Street and the Academy are not so sundered as they used to be, and the cheapening of the means of knowledge bids fair to obliterate not a few artificial intellectual distinctions.

Should certain ambiguities and inconsistencies in positions taken up at different points of the book seem evident to the critic, let him, before

pronouncing judgment, consider whether the appearance be not removable by closer regard to the context. There are some occasions when a reticence verging even on scepticism is in place, some when the clear avowal of personal conviction is the world's due.

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THE GAIN OF LIFE.

I.

NATURE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE DISCUSSION.

A WRITER who has influenced contemporary thought probably more than any other man living, at least in English-speaking lands, expressed himself, in a work published a few years ago, as follows :—

“ The question to be definitely raised and answered before entering on any ethical discussion, is the question of late much agitated—Is life worth living? Shall we take the pessimist view? or shall we take the optimist view? or shall we, after weighing pessimistic and optimistic arguments, conclude that the balance is in favour of a qualified optimism? On the answer to this question depends

entirely every decision concerning the goodness or badness of conduct." ¹

It is always comfortable to be able to fall back upon authority ; and I put in evidence this weighty testimony of Mr. Herbert Spencer, to rebut in advance an objection that might possibly occur to some minds, that the discussion to which I am about to invite the reader's attention is profitless and barren, having full sympathy with those who are prone to remark — "Seeing the brief leisure allotted to most, there is really no time for propounding, and worrying ourselves over, ingenious but insoluble enigmas." I hold that Bacon was right, that Comte was right, when they frowned on the exercise of mere dialectic subtlety, and insisted that human energy should be expended on *fertile* work. It may be a vice in the blood but it is a vice beyond the medicament of any academic doctor, which renders the ear of the average Englishman deaf to any spheral music that cannot be translated into the chords and unisons of his familiar terrestrial scale. Mr. Spencer's declaration, then, that "on the answer to this question [Is life worth living ?] depends entirely every

¹ "The Data of Ethics," by Herbert Spencer, 1879, p. 26.

decision concerning the goodness or badness of conduct," approves itself to my own practically-constituted mind; but, as there may be those to whom the assertion may not so readily commend itself, it may be as well before going further to attempt some justification of the dictum.

Supposing the human mind to be so far developed as to draw a distinction between *good* and *bad* conduct, it must, either implicitly or explicitly, possess a criterion of goodness or badness. The number of criteria that have been proposed from time to time are, as we all know, (in appearance) sufficiently numerous. Theoretical moralists have, with more or less success, reduced these numerous tests of action to a few, or even a single ultimate principle. But, without stopping to consider the grounds of these various reductions, it will not be difficult to see that *some opinion on the worth of life* is in all cases a tacit or overt supposition. Whatever questions be asked—"Shall I add to my vital resources? Shall I expend them to increase the vital resources of another? Shall we give up the game, and deeming the struggle a hopeless one, drift into the ocean of oblivion

and nothingness; or shall we consume our hours in litanies and chants, ignoring vulgar aims and living (as is thought) for a better future?"—it is evident that an estimate of the worth of human life is always in the background.

The life to be lived, or foregone, is the life *now*. The life now (terrestrial life) is either all, or a part of, my life. Say it is all—then the judgment on my conduct is determined by the maximum of effort to increase the satisfaction of living, or to diminish the displeasure of existence. Say, it is only a *part*—then, although the sort of action judged good or bad must be vastly different to what it would be if it were the *whole*, as *this* life is alone within our control, *its* supposed value still must be a tacit premise in every practical syllogism.

So far all may be plain, but two points have still to be settled, one of which we are unable to postpone. I have been employing without definition the expression "the worth of life," but is that expression perfectly clear? or can there be a difference of opinion as to its proper interpretation? On one supposition there can be no doubt as to its meaning. If

it be assumed that terrestrial life is the whole life with which we have any concern, then I take it there can be no other rendering of the word "worth" than one which implies *Feeling*. Feeling I regard as a genus that has two species — Pleasure and Pain. In certain psychological treatises we find, indeed, a third class styled "neutral feelings." I am bound to confess I don't know what these are. I know the perception of a feeling, I know the recollection of a feeling, but I don't know feeling itself except as a mode of consciousness whose abolition I resist, or from whose continuance I make efforts to be free—and the one mode we call *pleasure*, the other *pain*.

I shall have more to say on this subject of Pleasure and Pain later on, but for the present I refrain from considering either their nature or their conditions, and simply appeal to the reader's consciousness for elucidation of the terms employed. Well, then, what I affirm is that, if terrestrial life be all of life with which we have any concern, *worth of life* must mean comparative quantity of Pleasure and Pain. In estimating the worth of life, accordingly, we shall have to consider to the best of our

ability all the contributory causes to agreeable or disagreeable consciousness, to calculate the probability of an increase or diminution of such pleasurable or painful feeling, taking into account the constitution of man, and the fixed facts of outward nature. The inquiry will be a difficult one, but, however trying, it is an inquiry which the mind bent on rationalizing conduct cannot evade; and in fact, although the consideration may not deserve the name of inquiry, an opinion is arrived at in some crude fashion by the humblest human being.

But supposing the above interpretation put upon "worth" to be challenged, what other meaning (on the assumption that our action is confined to this earth-life) can the word bear? What meaning else for Human Dignity if this short career be "rounded with a sleep?" if our globe be doomed to enter upon a last Ice-Age, and there be even no ghost of the departed to preserve a speechless memory of the By-gone—at the most a new earth and a new heaven arising related to this merely as the bricks of a ruined palace are related to the fabric of a peasant cottage they help to compose? What higher glory is there for Man to

strive after in such case than the utmost bodily comfort, the delight in the sure unravelling of Nature's secrets, the fascination of Art, the rapture of returned love? But what are all these ends but Feelings? Are they not pleasures in some human heart, look at them in whatever light we will?

Thus far there can be little room for difference of opinion; but there is another alternative—that this life may not be so meagrely related to the Universal Life as just supposed. This alternative may be subdivided. For either there may be a continuation of human life under other physical conditions, or activity here in the flesh may tell upon an underlying essential Reality of the Universe.

If what is shortly known as the "doctrine of Immortality" be assumed true, there seems still no room for an interpretation of "worth" different from that which we have seen reason to adopt under a more restricted understanding of life. For we can form no conception of a life hereafter, that is not a life analogous to the present one. We may consider present opportunities and aims indefinitely enlarged, but the same *in kind* that life must be if we are to realize it in imagination at all. And if so, what

need to say more to prove that "worth" still can only mean pleasure or pain?

But there is the other half of our alternative. Existence may no longer be conceived merely phenomenally. Beneath all its manifested forms we may suppose an Immanent Reality in which "we live and move and have our being," whose life-pulse we are, which sees through our eyes and wills with our wills,—must in that case Worth of Life bear the meaning extensive and intensive pleasure or pain? We are treading here on delicate ground enough, and I would not go a step further than the logic of the position compels me; but, although I do not purpose to say more than suffices for a bare answer at the present stage, I cannot blink the inquiry without incurring the reproach of slurring a difficulty.

Observe, I set aside the hypothesis of a Transcendent God, of a God, that is, who is distinct from Me. Such a hypothesis, so far as our present question is concerned, introduces no fresh situation, as the *ultima ratio* of Future Rewards and Punishments of the orthodox theology sufficiently shows. But an Immanent God, the Pantheistic conception, does that require another estimate of Worth than a

feeling one? Why should it? The God in whom I live and move and have my being, must not His and my aims be homogeneous? His nature is indefinitely vaster than mine. True. His Will is Universal Will—not partial will, egoistic or altruistic—but what can be the content of even a Universal Will, that embraces past, present, and future, all forms of life that have been, do, or ever will, arise? You may reply, It is vain to imagine, and to attempt to imagine it is to dwarf the Reality of Realities to one of its organs. The objection is forcible; but see what follows. Then the supreme duty is *unreasoning impulse* and nothing more. For if we can't know what the All-Will is aiming at, and yet we have to work in conformity with such aim, what test of Right and Wrong have we, what Rule of conduct but this—live as instinct urges you, and trust all will be well in the end?

Now I am not going to affirm that the consequence of such a principle would be so very dreadful after all. On the contrary, I hold that some of the best action of this world has resulted from such an unreasoning impulse. Perhaps the very greatest of men are the least critical; and collective Man never yet has been

borne to any grand deed by aught but Impulse. At what time has a nation ever achieved a considerable work as the result of cool reflection, and not rather been swept along by some powerful feeling which lifted it off its feet, so that it went blindly to its goal, and was itself astonished at the event? But although Nations, or the average humanity which makes up nations, are still very young, individual man is growing older, and the age of reason succeeds the age of impulse. The man who takes Impulse for his guide does not criticise conduct at all, has no moral law at all. And such a man is either at the beginning of development or at its consummation. To do right *unknowingly* is either the unpurchased gift of the child or the earned privilege of the saint. It behoves, however, those who would proscribe Reason in favour of Impulse to consider very clearly what they are doing.

The position I am examining is this. Man is only a member of an inconceivably vast organism, having as such a special function to perform. With regard to this function he has no choice, it is determined by the nature of the Organism itself. Its aim is concealed from his finite view ; and knowing only that the appro-

priate action of the parts is determined by the object of the whole, there is but one thing for him to do—to obey what seems to him the inspired guidance of immediate feeling. Now to make this principle of action a safe one it is necessary to know the marks of the inspiring guide. Does Impulse contain in itself such an absolutely certain mark ?

One kind of impulse can be accounted for, viz., the instinctive tendencies determined by hereditary influences, the result of a prolonged similar reaction on like stimulus. These impulses are kings by divine right perhaps, but only by the divine right of actual possession.

To know when an organized impulse is no longer to be obeyed, is the very thing we are in quest of. The impulse itself cannot show, for the impulse is fatal, that is, blind—it tells its story of the Past, it bears no revelation for the Future. Surely an appeal must lie somewhere. The worth of impulse must be tried by a higher tribunal, and what higher tribunal can we conceive than Reason ? But (and this is the assumption) suppose there be another kind of impulse, an impulse not generated by heredity, come straight from Heaven—that is, a direct afflatus of the (supposed) supermaterial

Will. And this is the impulse to which the World - Reformer believes he is yielding, believes it when he declares, for example, "I must obey God rather than Man," that is to say, a law higher than that traditionally received, an impulse deeper than that of ancestral habit, but a law of whose significance he professes himself totally in the dark. But, granted that we know the true prophet when we see him, or recognize the airs from heaven when they fan our souls, why is the prophetic dictum or the prophetic mood trusted? Do we trust it because it is God's will, and that is all? Do we ever trust a superior human will simply because it is will? I think not, even when most awed. The reflecting man, at all events, the man who can frame to himself the distinction of a goodness or badness of conduct, never. Insignificant as we are, mere insects ephemerally fluttering in a universe of boundless space and boundless time, we can only trust the God in our breasts, though He speak in the thunders of innumerable Sinais, because in the "whisper of the spirit" we have the conviction there is latent Reason, because we believe that there is a more far-seeing Wisdom concealed in this authoritative afflatus than we

are at present able to grasp. Reason is king then, not blind Urging ; and we trust our inspiration, because it is only our own hope " writ large."

One step more, and the argument is clinched. If the goodness or badness of conduct is a distinction to which Reason alone can speak, and an estimate of the Worth of Life, as we saw before, is a condition precedent to our decision, can Worth, even under the presupposition of the most rarified metaphysic, bear any other than a hedonistic interpretation? Can the question whether Life regarded in its totality, and not merely terrestrially, be WORTHY, mean, on any ontological assumption whatever, other than this—can *experienced Pleasure outweigh experienced Pain*? A good world, an *ill* world, what can these adjectives mean but amount of feeling relatively pleasurable or painful somewhere in some sentient natures? If these expressions be not so interpreted, how are they to be understood? What sort of end, arrangement, or constitution, can there be that in the last resort does not imply a preferential sentiment?

I am not ignorant that there are theorists who hold the world to have had its birth in

chaos, and that as it was in the beginning, so it will be in the end, that a blind chaotic impulse is the World-Will. I will not pause to examine this theory, it must be kept in reserve ; it is sufficient to say that I am talking now of a *cosmos*, that is of an orderly world in which we conscious human beings have to act, and conscious action must put some meaning into life as a conscious fact. None the less, however, is Order for Order's sake an absurdity. Numberless efforts have been made to distinguish Hedonism and Morality, and Morality has been set up as a higher principle, even as the object of the World-genesis itself. But this is to confound the form or frame with the content or substance of Law. No criticism lays bare the absurdity of this position so neatly as the remark of an eminent continental thinker—"The assertion, that the world exists in order that we may be moral in it, is about as rational as to say that a ball is given that people may put on dress-coats and white cravats, and conform to the etiquette of the ball-room."¹ Until, indeed, some meaning can be put into the term *value of life* that

¹ "Phänomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins." Prolegomena zu jeder künftigen Ethik. Von Eduard von Hartmann, 1879, p. 661.

does not come round by a long or a short road to Feeling, I must hold it to be proved that, whatever extent be given to the fact Life and our share of the same, an evaluation of the pleasure or pain therein experienced is that which must form the preliminary consideration of any ethical doctrine, and be the condition precedent to any moral judgment.

A subsidiary, though not unimportant, point also, I trust to have made through this preliminary discussion as to the meaning of the expression "Worth of Life," viz., that whatever our ultimate creed, whether we are materialists or supernaturalists, metaphysicians or anti-metaphysicians, *the terms of our discussion must be homogeneous.* In comparing the rival claims of Optimism and Pessimism we shall not vary our kind of argument according to the speculative foundations assumed. The good or evil of the world must be good or evil of *the whole world within the range of our conduct.* Undoubtedly. I am not going to raise what to me is an idle question,—what is the value of Life apart from man's sphere of influence? My thesis is Worth of Life in relation to practical conduct. It may make much difference to my derivative rules of con-

duct whether that life be sixty or sixty millions of years, or incomputable æons ; it will make no difference whatever as to my final criterion of the rectitude of my conduct. However you may estimate the range of the Sentient Ego, whether it be contracted to the dimensions of "a dot of animated jelly," or whether it be coextensive with the life of our planet (the Comtean *Grand-Être*), or be as young and as old as the Universe itself, makes no difference to the rationale of my Hedonical calculus. I foreclose no question of ontology. I desire to compare notes with the professors of every creed.

It must have struck many acquainted with the history of ethical thought as strange that a careful author, whose book bears the recent date 1879, should without preamble assert that on the answer to the question "Is life worth living?" "depends entirely every decision concerning the goodness or badness of conduct," since, as a matter of fact, the assertion is almost unique in ethical literature. The circumstance admits of a sufficient explanation, as I shall immediately show; but let me remind those who endorse it that they are committed to an opinion that the question of Optimism

and Pessimism is not (as some fancy) a passing question, a mere whim of the Zeit-geist, but a question for all time, and one that our successors are going to hear much more of than we. There is a notion in some quarters that Pessimism is nothing but the wild cry of some ill-starred beings worsted in the struggle of existence, or the methodic madness of malevolent genius desirous of poisoning the pleasure of the self-satisfied Philistine by regaling him with a catalogue of mortal diseases in the midst of his luxurious feast. The "popularity" of Pessimism owes much to the brilliant exposition of certain eloquent Germans; but Pessimism was not born with the Dantzig misanthrope, and certainly has not died with him. There has been perhaps less systematic writing with a pessimistic than an optimistic bias, but the balance is beginning to be redressed, and such a remark as that of Strauss, for instance, that "every true philosophy must of necessity be optimistic,"¹ will

¹ "Der alte und der neue Glaube." Dritte Auflage, p. 146. Strauss has a very short way with the "pessimistic philosopher." If everything is bad, he says, thinking is bad. The thought that "the world is bad" is therefore a bad thought. *Ergo* "the world is good" is good thinking.—But the badness of the world to the pessimist does not mean merely *inherent irrationality*, but *inevitable suffering*. Comp. Sully's "Pessimism," p. 143, note.

soon cease to be considered worthy of a dispassionate mind.

Now the reason, why this discussion has of late assumed such prominence as almost to seem a new thing in history (although its antecedents are by no means obscure, as has been made abundantly clear by those who have sifted the matter), is that the world is all at once beginning to realize the fact that it is emerging from its youthhood, and is entering upon the cares and responsibilities of the full-grown man. In early youth it contrived to keep its peace unbroken in the presence of the sorrowful Actual, either projecting its own amiability into the transcendent sphere, or lulling itself to rest with the magic opiate—Evil is only privation of Good.

Facts, however, first, and fair fictions second—that is the word of a world with serious business before it, where strength is only to be had from the cup of Experience, even though it be bitter, but fatal enervation from the intoxicating draught of the Circe of our own vain desires.

The worth of life is a sufficiently serious and thrilling theme, and no one who has once comprehended its scope can again put it lightly

by. I am not speaking of our passing moods ; moods count for nothing in philosophical discussions. A well-timed legacy may make us, in a sense, optimist to-night, an explosion of dynamite pessimist to-morrow. That is "newspaper" Optimism and Pessimism. But the Optimism and Pessimism I am speaking of is the awful question—Is the world of which we are a part so constituted as to afford its sentient atoms such a preponderance of agreeable over displeasurable feeling as to make it a reasonable aim to continue such life of it as we have control over,—or is it not? The Western half of the world at any rate has undoubtedly (with eminent exceptions) implied an affirmative answer by its conduct, although it has not clearly put to itself the problem and its issue. But in the fulness of youthful vigour we imply the correctness of many beliefs we abandon with advancing years ; and even when we do not reject them, we are unable any longer to adopt them without testing their accuracy. So it is with this matter of the Worth of Life.

It is one of the results of experience to show that two factors are concerned in every achievement—energy of will and the nature of the environment. Now the progress of knowledge

is modifying our conception of each. As regards the external factor, we are coming to reverse the belief of our fathers that Physical Nature is the fixed, and Social Nature the plastic, element. Physical Nature is becoming plastic in our hands, and we find that ponderous mountains may be removed and cast into the sea. On the other hand, however, Human Society seems at times a dead weight. The glowing reformer, equipped with all the resources of modern knowledge, and gifted with much persuasive eloquence, points in vain to a fairer land a stone's throw beyond our habitations. The logic it is admitted is faultless, the new order of things is indefinitely better, and yet . . . not an iota of practice is changed. Archimedes desiderated his lever to move the globe : he has got it. Ask the engineer, ask the electrician, do they ever despair of success ? Not a jot. Nothing is beyond the range of the physicist's faith. But the social Archimedes is crushed by his own engines ; and already one may hear ominous whispers that individual effort is vain, and that a more unbending Fate than was ever depicted by Greek tragedian holds us tightly in its grasp. And as our estimate of the character of the outer

factor is changing, so the internal factor is beginning to present itself in a new light.

It can scarcely be said that the nature of Volition and of the relation of Will to conscious intelligence is as plain to us as it was to our fathers. For the one puzzle that baffled the wit of our ancestors—whether the human will be free or necessitated—we have a crop of enigmas that are beginning to relegate our psychological classics to the shelves of oblivion. In short, as an Individualistic Psychology is unable to explain Knowledge as universalized in Science, so Individualistic Psychology is only able to touch the fringe of the problem of Will. The point where the practical difficulty emerges is in regard to Desire, for an understanding of the object and limits of Desire is of supreme importance to every man. According to the varying bent of the character will be the pressure of this difficulty, and the shoe that pinches one will not misfit another.

Of far-reaching consequence is the consideration that an increase of reflectiveness *must* tend to widen the interval between spontaneity and deliberate action. I shall not exaggerate the rapidity of the progress of this tendency. The sun must travel far before it attains the zenith,

but its influence is ever extending, although the progress be not perceived from moment to moment. The growth of reflective consciousness is fatal, whether aught else be so or no. Rather will it be possible to bring the sea to stay its onward roll than to repress the unfolding of consciousness. It is waste of strength to mourn over the increase of the rational spirit, if to mourn over it be our inclination. It is the part of wisdom to adapt ourselves to the inevitable, and if you would not have the monster Destiny crush you, you must wrestle with it to victory. Beautiful, perhaps, was it when man and woman did their duty without knowing that they did it; but that is no longer our portion: we must render to ourselves and our fellows a reason for our conduct, and refuse to take a step, or perform an act, without being ourselves satisfied it is right, and being prepared to justify it before the fit tribunal. Those, of course, to whom the awful vision has never appeared have no spectres to lay; they who are not urged by an unresting desire to be in harmony with a Supreme Ideal will not set apart an hour of their already filled existence to ask themselves the question whether their strivings be really even their own gain or

loss ; but others, who know what a world-hope and a world-despair mean, cannot but address themselves to a question so momentous as that of the Value of Life.

In one sense we men of the Western world are children as compared with our fellows in the East. Long before our dark ages, which preceded the light of Science of which we are so proud, the meditative Oriental had envisaged possibilities, and shaped his conduct in accordance with profound speculations, which are only just beginning to excite an interest. Schopenhauer's great work, "The World as Will and Idea," came to European society as a grotesque original conceit, although the best in Schopenhauer was freely confessed by himself to be a borrowed light from a long-ignored East. At a certain point we shall have to take counsel with this Hindoo-Germanic philosophy, but it would be a mistake to commence our study with an examination of Brahmanic and Schopenhauerian Metaphysic or Theosophy. I shall observe the Aristotelian canon of passing from the better to the less known. The proper order surely is to collect vital statistics, and that, too, in the order of their complexity—first, facts of life in the lower animal kingdom, then the

recorded experience of our own race. Only when we have generalized these phenomena will it be permitted to call for their significance. We may then well ask—How do these facts look when related to certain theoretical suppositions? Is the Pleasure and Pain balance-sheet, that we have obtained through a review of the various phases and grades of consciousness, itself an ultimate to be immediately dealt with, and directly applied to furnish a rule of action, or is there reason to suspect or believe that there is a hidden truth, and that a profounder revelation will affect our practical rules?

It must be obvious that our work is well cut out for us, and no one can be more sensible of the reach of the problem than I myself am. In extenuation of my temerity in venturing to deal with such a theme, I must plead, first, that so far as I know, there is no book, or source of information, in the English tongue that is at once concise and comprehensive on this subject. I have a profound respect for Mr. Spencer, as my introductory remarks have shown; but, although he has enounced so pregnant a principle as that to which I have more than once referred, he has only thought

it needful to devote half a dozen pages to an examination of the pivot on which Moral System turns. There is, it is true, a book which raises the question on its title-page, "Is life worth living?"¹ a book that must have taught somebody, for it made its author famous; but what object was intended to be served by it, or what relation the end had to the middle, or the middle to the beginning, I have not yet been fortunate enough to discover. A writer of quite another cast of mind should of course be specially mentioned,² and Dr. Sully needs no praise of mine, in respect of either industry of research or philosophical acumen; but as I am in the censuring vein I may perhaps be forgiven for saying that I fancy I detect a lack of sympathy with modes of thinking alien to the writer's temperament, which makes the book fitter for the closet-student than for the unprofessional reader.

In the second place, my own object is not controversial; it is to stimulate reflection rather than to take sides. Let us marshal the evidence before we attempt to pronounce sentence,

¹ "Is Life Worth Living?" by William Hurrell Mallock, 1879.

² "Pessimism: A History and a Criticism," by James Sully, M.A., author of "Sensation and Intuition: Studies in Psychology and Æsthetics," 1877.

still less proceed to exhortation. As Professor Henry Sidgwick says in regard to a kindred subject, "I have thought that the prominence in the minds of moralists of a desire to edify has impeded the real progress of ethical science,"¹ so we may say of Optimism and Pessimism. It has rarely been my good fortune to take up a disquisition on this subject that has not abounded in special pleading and special scolding, and impartiality compels me to add that the champions of Optimism have not least distinguished themselves in the war of abuse.

Grave themes of Science and Philosophy are not subjects for vituperation and passion. These serene goddesses are blasphemed by priests who presume to speak in their names with passion on their lips; and we may be assured that those who do not frequent their fanes in the spirit of learners will carry away no blessing in their souls. It is hard, doubtless, to see the cherished foundations of our spiritual fabric corroded by the unregarding hand of prosaic Fact; but if the foundations really are rotten, the house built upon them must fall

¹ "The Methods of Ethics," Preface to the first edition, p. vi.

in course of time, and it were better surely to step out into the daylight under the universal heaven itself than be awakened, perhaps only to the sleep of death, by the falling of the loosened rafters. "What terrible questions," writes the fearless Emerson, "we are learning to ask! The former men believed in magic, by which temples, cities, and men were swallowed up, and all trace of them gone. We are coming on the secret of a magic which sweeps out of men's minds all vestige of theism and beliefs which they and their fathers held and were framed upon." ¹ The spell which has this force is no other than the questioning spirit of Man and the conjuration is as old as the world itself — *Knowledge is Power.*

¹ "The Conduct of Life," ix., *Illusions.*

II.

EVIDENCE PRESENTED IN THE LIFE OF BRUTES AND THE HISTORY OF OUR RACE.

WHAT is Life, and where does it begin? Profoundly difficult, and perhaps insoluble, questions. We shall not, however, be arrested by the inability of Science to furnish satisfactory answers to them, for our inquiry presupposes a certain degree of vital activity, and biological puzzles only concern us so far as they have an undeniable psychological aspect. Such a problem is the assignment of the boundary line between corporeally reflex processes, whether peripherally or centrally initiated, and any mode of psychical activity. Is the Plant sensible? Are all animals aware, in however slight a degree, of the contrast known to our developed consciousness as Pleasure and Pain? What are the indubitable marks of spiritual life? How far can we take our own personal experience as a key to un-

lock the mysteries of a lower plane of being? Curious as many of these questions are, I apprehend their relation to the conduct of human life to be very indirect. We have no means of determining whether the shrinking, or sunward inclining, of the plant has any subjective implications, or, if so, of what kind they are. Nor is our ground at all sure even in the case of the lowest manifestations of animal existence. The prehension of food seems to imply hunger; the reception of what is beneficial, and rejection of what is injurious, to the organism, a faculty of selection: but Hunger and Selectiveness are terms so distinctly connoting consciousness that it seems straining the rules of justifiable analogy to bring under one rubric the movements subservient to nutrition of a Rhizopod or a jelly-fish, and the intended actions of a higher vertebrate.

Without, indeed, being unduly sceptical we may fairly demand that, where psychological implications are suggested, there should be a considerable approach to identity of physical conditions. It is not enough to have an organism, even an organism with a rudimentary nervous system, but the physical

substrata must be similar in all but the details to those which a uniform experience shows to be necessary in our own case for the support of such subjective phenomena. But still, where to draw the line? I think we are clearly warranted in taking as our lower limit a rudimentary Brain. There may be a psychical life concomitant with the irritation of those aggregations of nervous matter which answer to our spinal cord and visceral ganglia, but it is not a psychical life the terms of which are known to us. If the worth of life means, as I attempted to show in the first chapter, comparative quantity of pleasure and pain, and *we* have no cognizance of pleasure and pain in the absence or dormancy of a higher centre than the spinal cord, whatever conclusions the Law of Continuity may constrain us to as regards a spiritual aspect of material Nature, it does not constrain us to assume a mode of sensibility which, in the only cases we have indubitable evidence of it, is correlated with highly specialized physical conditions.

We must not lay too much stress on resemblance of outward movements. A decapitated frog when irritated simulates the movements of an uninjured animal, and even

a living bird, all whose superior nervous centres have been removed, will still perform the most surprising quasi-intelligent feats, but the adapted action of no machinery is competent to prove an indwelling soul in the machine. In fact, the more perfect the mechanism the less the consciousness, we might without cost to logic infer, for the actions of ourselves that are most unerringly adjusted to particular cases are those attended by a minimum of feeling. That outward indications by themselves count for little may be seen in the case of the artificial somnambulist or the chloroformed, where we may have the signs of even an exalted psychical life without its reality. The late George Henry Lewes brings the point to an issue very clearly when he writes "Under anæsthetics patients manifest sensation, but on awaking they declare that they felt nothing—of what value is their declaration? M. Despine tells us of a patient who, under chloroform struggled, swore, and cried out '*Mon Dieu ! que je souffre !*' yet when the operation was over, and he emerged from the effects of the chloroform, he remembered nothing of what he had felt."¹

¹ "The Physical Basis of Mind," p. 399.

“Of what value is their declaration?” Of the utmost value, for with absence of memory vanish pleasure and pain themselves. If I don’t know after the briefest interval that I had an experience, then I had not an experience, for what evidence have we of any of our mental states save in memory? The event is always past ere we are aware of it, and the impression in memory is a measure of the force of the feeling. That the chloroformed patient gesticulated as if he were in intense pain, and yet knew not (when the influence of the anæsthetic wore off) that he had been in pain, is no more evidence that the gesticulation was motived by feeling than the plaintive cry of the rabbit, deprived of its brain, is evidence of its being aware of the squeezing of the flesh to which the cry was sequent. Still more remarkable is the case of the so-called biologized subject, where the unintended signs of exalted moral feeling and religious devotion might excite the envy of the most accomplished actor.¹ But to return to Lewes’s argument. What shall we say of the subjective significance of a state of sleep in which there is considerable muscular movement and

¹ Carpenter’s “Mental Physiology,” 1876, p. 604.

evidence of much nervous agitation, and yet no record on awaking of any supposed prodigious feat or horrible experience? Such "dreams" count for nought in the sum of our inward experience, and so likewise all those waking moments in which the "eyes are open, but their sense is shut."

When, then, we come to estimate the hedonistic experience of the sub-human animal world, we find our calculation rendered fundamentally difficult by our ignorance of the sufficient conditions for pleasurable and painful feeling. Fetichism is a projection of Human Consciousness into Physical Nature, a primitive stage of explanation that the higher members of the human race have outgrown; but the propensity which gave birth to Fetichism is still unsubdued, and the anthropomorphizing tendency is still the shaper of false theory and mistaken conduct. A review of the facts of human experience should, however, of itself teach us caution, for it is undeniable that the pleasure and pain estimates of the civilized are widely different from those of the savage. The stolid indifference of the primitive races in circumstances which would excite the modern man to frenzy, the endurance of mutilations

that would prove too much for the ecstatic martyr's fortitude, the intense delight in cruelty habitual to rude tribes, but so foreign to the sympathetic modern mind that humane men even try to argue it into non-existence, are testimonies to gradations of sentience that render generalization, save when place and time are approximately close, a matter of considerable difficulty. The writhings of lower animals may be utterly disproportioned to the intensity of feeling, and the cry of victory imply no elation of conquest such as we understand it, still less the sweet rapture of gratified revenge. Having said so much, as a protection from rash inference, the legitimate testimony borne by the brute world must be duly regarded, and such evidence as is unambiguous, be adduced to help form an estimate of the phenomena of human sentience.

Now in the sub-human animal world, with few exceptions, the aims of existence may be said to be two, Alimentation and Reproduction. To procure food, and continue the species, such is the sum and substance of the activity of almost all brutes, however diversified its forms. Both objects are always attended with difficulty, and often with intense struggle. Merely to

exist in the present demands unremitting exertion ; to live for the future also in descendants is usually only possible at the price of ferocious and dangerous conflict. Against the satisfaction to be derived from the processes of nutrition must be set off the perils of the chase, and the pangs of unrelieved and unrelievable hunger, owing to seasonal vicissitudes, or the absence of the necessary prey. We have no means of striking the balance.

Schopenhauer, indeed, thinks the case sufficiently clear. He says, "Let him who would shortly test the assertion that in the world pleasure exceeds pain, or at least that they balance one another, compare the sensations of an animal that devours another animal, with those of the latter."¹ He means, I presume, that we should generalize this case, and weigh the pangs of so many ill-treated animals with the pleasures derivable from so many meals. But, even granted that the former are largely in excess in cases of slow death, there are also to be taken into account the pleasures of meals obtained at the expense of victims whose death is practically instantaneous, to say nothing of the enjoyment received by her-

¹ "Parerga und Paralipomena," Zweiter Band, 1877, p. 313.

bivorous animals. More serious seem to me the drawbacks due to scarcity of food in the shape of semi-starvation, the agonies of prolonged inanition, and the even more terrible unquenched thirst. If it requires all the resources of man's intelligence to avoid a continually recurring famine, and in certain regions still this is one of the most dreadful calamities that can befall our race, can we suppose that reluctant Nature will not only too frequently be more than a match for the strength and cunning of the brute? I confess to a suspicion that the life which maintains itself on this lower plane of existence is but a small fraction of the total life reproduced, and that a large part of the sustained life is a lingering dying. We must not, of course, allow our thoughts to dwell on the case of our domesticated animals, who are in many respects more favourably circumstanced than even their human protectors. I suppose a well-tended house-dog or cat has a more comfortable existence than his master. But we must imagine the long struggle for bare existence which animals living in a state of nature have waged for ages, and picture to ourselves the precarious character of that existence, and the unparalleled exertions required for each

animal race to keep its footing on the earth.

But it may be said, If Life is so costly an affair, why do the animals seek to maintain it? Why should not the brute long ago have given up the desperate struggle? Is not the continuance of such a struggle itself a proof that pleasure predominates over pain? I confess I do not see the cogency of this argument. Will it be said that in the true sense of the term the animal has a *choice* whether it will live or die, or whether it will continue its race? Truly, by the nature of will, no act will be performed by an undeveloped intelligence that does not sustain a state of satisfaction or is not supposed to remove an uneasiness; but it remains to be shown which is the true antecedent, a state of pleasure or a state of pain. That I am not comfortable is a motive to me to endeavour to acquire a more agreeable state of feeling, but unless I can "look before and after," am already rational, I cannot weigh the chances of the effort. That there has been such a profusion of animal life is no proof in itself of a preponderance of pleasure, for had there been no positive pleasure at all, the result would have been no other than what it has been.

In passing upward to man it is long before the circumstances are so much changed as to enlarge the scope of action ; and indeed Man, with all his vaunted spiritual eminence, still remains essentially animal, with an animal's desires—and what these are we have already seen. The struggle for subsistence, the sexual appetite, still absorb the largest share of human interest, and the Laureate's vision of a time when "the ape and tiger die" in us is not likely to be speedily realized.

So far, then, as the cardinal interests of life are concerned, the same kind of considerations apply in the case of Man as in that of the brutes. The difference lies, in fact, not in the substance of activity, but in the form ; not in the circumstance that our aims are essentially different from those of our brute progenitors, but in the circumstance that these ends are differently apprehended, owing to our enhanced faculty of representation or imagination. But this representativeness of human intelligence makes all the difference, introduces, indeed, a change so vast as to make the pleasure and pain of the lower animal world, extensive as they are, seem almost incommensurable with intensive human joys and sorrows. The dif-

ference is great admittedly, but it is not a difference requiring a new criterion of worth. Where there is organic continuity, distinctions are often highly misleading. As there is no break physically between man and brute, so doubtless there is none psychically, and distinction of savage and civilized, of non-rational and rational, of natural and moral, are only justifiable when for some special purpose we wish to contrast remote terms of a series. At what stage does Brute become Man? And if primitive man was brute-man or man-brute, when did brute-man become man such as we are wont to consider him, taking the leading races of to-day as our standard?

Brutes do not reason, it is sometimes said, their ideas are only "associated"; the dog, having no thought-grammar, automatically dreading the upraised stick, because he was once beaten by a something which produced a cerebral impression that is somehow fused with that made by the stick now before his eyes. What pains people will take to support preconceived theories! Not to mention that the wild man of the forest infers the existence of his foe from signs similar to those which announced a foe before, how is

the dog's inference different from that of the student of Aristotle? Does the cultured Oxford professor argue, "All moving trains crush creatures of flesh and blood that are placed in their path, so I, being one of the class, won't cross the line till the train has passed?" Or rather does he not swift as lightning form a mental picture of his probable fate if he attempted the rash deed, his prerogative being not to reason by way of generals, but to envisage possibilities of which an animal of lower grade of representative faculty was incapable? Whether it be the dog, the wild man, or the European *savant*, the axiom that like causes are attended with like effects is the justification of the inference in each case, but it is inference all the same and logical inference too, whether the axiom be thought or not.

That the invention of a symbolic language marked the greatest crisis in Human History I do not doubt, but a symbolic language, although the foundation of later human greatness, did not remove man out of the category of embodied soul. The human soul is still the animal soul, and the increasing tenderness for the brute of recent years, though often maudlin enough, is a sign that civilized man is awaking to the perception that all animal life is akin.

The difficulty that we experienced when dealing with the sentience of brutes presses upon us to a certain extent in the case of the history of our own race. The history of our race that we possess is only the merest fragment of the whole. Not only is no record being kept of what is happening in the larger part of the world at this moment, but the record of any sort, save that transmitted from lip to lip, has only been possible during the last few thousand years, since the invention of writing. And when we further think what sort of records these much-prized histories are,—how in the vast majority of cases historians have given us merely the husks of human experience, how the subjectivity of the writer has coloured the plainest narratives, and to what an extent deliberate falsification has been attempted to flatter the vanity of some potentate, or serve the aims of some cherished cause,—it may well be asked what profit can be derived from records so very insufficient and untrustworthy. The state of things is undoubtedly bad enough, but, nevertheless, some help may be obtained towards arriving at a judgment on the question before us—the Worth of Human Life.

Here, as elsewhere in respect of facts of

Development, the golden rule is to seek the interpretation of the Past in the living Present, as the observation of what is going on around us will furnish many hints with regard to the obscure by-gone. We have only to take a sufficiently wide sweep, to collate facts from the most diverse quarters, and to cultivate a sufficiently sympathetic imagination.

It is not improbable that, if enough were known of the lives and thoughts of all contemporaneous families of mankind, we should have an approximate picture of what a complete biography of the race would present in succession. Whether the outward acts, or the inner thoughts and feelings, were mainly regarded, all phases that the human world have passed through would probably somewhere be revealed to the comprehensive view. Even with present scanty knowledge there is sufficient to enable us to form shrewd conjectures as to the character of the already completed evolution.

All the ills of human life, however manifold their disguises, have two sources—Ignorance, and Greed; all the goods are owing to two causes—an expenditure of vital force strictly proportioned to the rate of repair, and the

strength of the social impulse. To Ignorance are due the failure to master the conditions of physical well-being, the self-inflicted miseries entailed by false theories of the Power behind Appearances, and all the misdirected efforts of the philanthropic spirit, either in the narrow political or broader social sphere. Under Greed I class the surplus Egoism when the limits of self-preservation is reached, covetousness, envy, jealousy. And what a sorry account must be drawn up under these heads !

On the physical side, Disease is the chief form the monster Evil takes ; and Disease owes its origin to a lack of understanding of the physiological functions, of the relation of the human organism to its material environment, and to intemperance. Now, with rare exceptions, Disease is almost always painful, either directly as so much bodily suffering, or indirectly as entailing the intellectual pains of impotence, and (in a sympathetic nature) of the still higher pains of the felt consequences to others, either now living or yet unborn.

It seems to me that the magnitude of this Evil is still very imperfectly grasped, and that the optimistically biassed mind, which rejoices over the growing conquest of this fearful foe,

is often unduly elated through confining its vision to the palpable, and not taking full account of the subtle correlation of the finer bodily organs and their spiritual manifestations. We may conceive it probable that in course of time a knowledge of the conditions of epidemic disease ; and an advanced Hygiene may have coped with the more deadly forms of physical disease ; but it will be long ere Science proves a match for the tendencies to generate subtle forms of disease inherent in the state of struggle and restless ambition of an ardent world. Further, who can doubt that, as the conditions of successful competition increase in complexity, a well-balanced nervous constitution will be a greater need than ever, and the more delicate the organ the easier for it to get out of gear. Moreover, injury to the brain is not necessarily fatal ; the mischief of diminished brain-power is that it tells upon the vegetative system in many slight ways, depressing but not endangering the vital powers, and having a still more serious consequence in the feeling that it is not possible to keep up with others in the race of life. The diseases which kill may for a short time be attended with fearful torments, but the diseases which only enfeeble

cast their shadow over the whole of perhaps a long life.

If we turn to that other source of our debit account—excessive egoism—a no less gloomy picture is presented. In the lowest plane there is War. Wars now are comparatively humane, but from the lesser evils of the Present we may collect an idea of the awful miseries of this desolating fiend of former days. Until comparatively recent times one might without much error have divided the male population of the globe into two halves, the one half occupied in providing food and material goods which the other half endeavoured forcibly to appropriate. To work for others to consume, or to obtain a precarious living by offering one's own manhood in payment, was the normal destiny. To submit to ceaseless peaceful toil for a minimum reward, or undergo the hardships of prolonged campaigns, and be liable to wounds without surgery or sympathy, such was the common lot. In such a state of things it is hard to believe the pleasure-side showed a balance. People in civilized lands to-day speak with a shudder of the horrors of war, but we are scarcely capable of framing an adequate idea of those horrors.

Just think what it must have meant to live in a perpetual state of insecurity, to be dragged any day to fight in some quarrel in which you had no concern and could gain no glory, and to expect no mercy from a conquering foe.

The acts and scenes of the play change, but the plot remains the same. The monster Greed shows its image not in the lurid glare of burning cities and amid the groans of lacerated victims, but in the squalid homes of artizans toiling for masters whose thrall they can only shake off to pass into a similar servitude, or where the apathy is born which knows no hope of better things, where to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow sees the same soul-depressing round of monotonous labour. The *régime* of Industrial Competition is an advance on the military mode of life, inasmuch as it makes possible a larger leisured class, and permits the manifestation of higher virtues. It cannot be denied that men are more callous under a military order of things. The frequent sight of physical suffering does not increase, but deadens, sympathy, and the self-control strengthened by the compulsion of implicit obedience is paid for at the terrible cost of a slavishness of submission to authority, and

the repression of independent aspiration. In an individualistic industrial order of things the virtues engendered by family-life are possible, and the intelligence that is quickened is certainly more social than that excited by destructive warfare.

But it is quite another question whether the gain is as large as appears upon the surface. That benefit accrues is undoubted, but, as before, the lion's share of the result goes not to the great army but to the few officers. They who inherit a post of vantage have the means of putting a large stock to the credit side of their feeling-account, but the common soldier in the economic warfare earns still his bare pittance. And to say that the worth of life is positive under such a state of things requires the assumption, either that the sensibility of the few is so vastly superior to that of the many that the excess-pleasures they obtain compensate the pains that fall to the lot of the multitude, or that the relative obtuseness of the majority makes the pain and the pleasure realized in consciousness excessively small save when summed in a vast aggregate.

Now it is hard to believe that the former of these assumptions holds, and for this reason.

The tendency of a *régime* of competition is to justify the aphorism, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Now it is notorious that the pain of loss is much greater than the pleasure of increased possession. To descend in the social scale brings a far greater pang than to rise in it through as many degrees. As the aristocratic ideal finds increasing realization, as wealth becomes more and more aggregated in a few hands, the area of discontent spreads, and the capacity for enlarged pleasure must grow to an extent that we may fairly call superhuman, if the pleasures of private possession are to outweigh the sense of privation of the multitude. As for the assumption that the feelings of the multitude are of so low an order that save in indefinite aggregates they are scarcely worth consideration, there is in this view one factor left out of sight, and that is the increase of intellectual perception. As education extends and improves, the capacity to imagine other conditions than one's own will increase; and the democratic ideal will assume the form of a sentiment of justice, which no mathematical calculus of aristocratic Hedonism will demon-

strate into non-existence. I will take it for granted, then, that there is such a vice as Covetousness, a vice that is measured by the envy excited in others by its successful manifestation, and that it is with Ignorance the twin pain-producing enemy of our race. Under Covetousness I would subsume lust of power and jealousy; under the privative quality Ignorance, short-sighted conservatism in every direction, Superstition and all its brood.

What are the make-weights to these baneful influences? A trusted organic Egoism in private, and a highly representative social impulse in public, life. The profound Spinoza wrote: "We do not desire a thing because we judge it to be good, but we judge it to be good because we desire it."¹ For "desire" read here organic impulse, and the sentiment, contrary as it is to orthodox ethics, will not be far from the truth. True, Desire has its limitations, there is a higher principle which must control it; but, in the absence of this law of a Higher Reason, it is the true guide of life. The word is, however, ambiguous, and we must define our terms, or a false signification will be suggested.

¹ See "Ethics," Pars iii., *Propositio ix.*, *Demonstratio*, *Scholium*.

The Desire of which I here speak is the primordial craving prior to reflection on its nature and causes. As such it is connate, and fixed. It is the voice of the ages speaking through us, the accumulated experience of all history. The other sort of Desire is the imagination of pleasure which arises through the vivid recollection of some former satisfaction. There is nothing in common between the two psychological phenomena. The latter may engender the former, but only indirectly, inasmuch as repeated action gives a bias to the constitution, and so the foundation of a fresh inherited craving may be laid. But although a few cravings may be of recent date, in the most important instances Desires have taken centuries and thousands of years to be created, and these are the desires with which our personal well-being is so profoundly wrapped up. If a man would only trust the bent of his nature, if he would only heed the monitions of his organic feelings, if he would only keep his impulses, whether emotional or rational, in their proper spheres, he would at least put himself in the way to realize his maximum of personal pleasure. But while Happiness is impossible without a deep-rooted Self-love, no conjuring can make

a Happy World out of Egoism alone, however clear-sighted. It would be well, indeed, if we more highly esteemed the virtue of Prudence, but the conditions of Human Development forbid that Prudence should be the last word of an upward-tending race. Altruism like Egoism is no product of the reflective understanding. No healthy Age has ever said, "Come, let us be brothers," but the foundation of life for others is laid deep in the animal world, and it has been the necessary lever of all Progress. With the realization of his personal Self by the single man keeps pace the growth of the Social Consciousness ; and the problem of the Future will undoubtedly be how to preserve and carry to its farthest limits the independence of the Individual, and yet retain the gravitation of the units to a Common Centre.

We have found the key now to the Hieroglyphic of the Past. We have seen of what coloured threads the network of human life is likely to be composed, and we may perhaps see our way to form some conclusions as to the pain and pleasure value of the long Ascent. Surveying History with calm dispassionate eye, what inferences can we gather from it as to the Worth of Life in the Past ? Supposing the end

were now, supposing that some cataclysm in Nature were to close the Human Chapter to-night, what verdict should be rendered as to the good or ill of the long story ?

There has been much happiness—who can question it ? but at what a price has it been purchased ! Take the department of Material Progress. Reckon up the long laborious hours consumed in the veriest routine merely to procure sufficient sustenance for the immediate morrow. History tells you of glorious battles, illustrious sovereigns, and the power and influence of a few privileged nobles ; but the swarms of slaves, of mere drudges, what of them ? Of the grandeur of a Pharaoh who ordered the erection of the pyramids something is known ; of the myriads driven by the lash to build them, nothing whatever. Cæsar's virtues are lauded to the skies, but the hosts who made his successes possible do not excite a spark of enthusiasm. Look, again, at the political sphere. Think of the unending struggle for the commonest rights, of the galling heel of a tyrant class, of the dungeons in which Despotism immured its independent victims, of the awful explosion of passion when the day of reckoning comes at last ! And if we turn to Spiritual

Interests, what an awful story that of the prostration of Man's intellect from craven fear of invisible powers, the soul-crushing despotism of priest-born systems, of the struggles to see Nature not through a sacerdotal veil, but as she is ! Remember how theories of divine wrath and jealousy have shaped the world's social laws ; how the fear of the gods has been often a greater curse than the fear of men ; how common human sentiment has been confused by the proscription of pleasurable acts and the prescription of painful ones ; how the mind has been absolutely kept in ignorance in order that the unlimited sway of the few in high places might be the better secured.

When summed up thus shortly, undoubtedly the picture presented is sufficiently black ; but if it had not been strongly relieved, it is hard to think that even obtuse-minded early man would have had the heart to prolong the struggle. As a single dreadful murder fills the daily journal and is the talk of the town, and yet it closely touches but one person in ten thousand, so these historical horrors would impress the imagination even though they might be relatively few in the midst of the whole life of a time. We must never forget that History at the best is only a

selection of events, and that it is only those tides which have left their mark above the habitual level it stops to record. The dark pages are enough of course to silence a boisterous optimism; they are not enough of themselves to allow of a condemnation of Life. The Pessimist must take higher ground if he wants to remain master of the field. He must show that "the game is not worth the candle"; that what is called pleasure is not what it seems; that while the pain is indubitable, the pleasure is rather *hope* of pleasure than pleasure itself; that, in fact, "Man never *is* but always *to be* blest."

Meanwhile, until that issue be tried, there are certain facts we may note, which may have their suggestions. Whatever Man has thought about his real or supposed good, he *has gone on living*. Although he has often freely surrendered his life at the call of despotism or for private ends, he has, with insignificant exceptions, preferred to remain in existence, and to prolong his days to the uttermost. Man has clung to life, *as if it possessed positive worth*. On the other hand, the men who have exercised the most commanding authority, the men who have been deified by adoring disciples, have

proclaimed both by precept and example ascetic creeds, which are practical denials of a positive value of life. For if Renunciation is the highest lesson that is to be learnt, then undoubtedly it is proclaimed that the good things of life are illusive goods, and the less we have to do with them, that is the more we quench desire, the more we touch reality. How has it come to pass that these self-renouncing men have not been treated as lunatics, but have been regarded as bringing the true and final word?

These two universal phenomena are plainly antithetic, and are at once a testimony to the view that Optimism and Pessimism are both historically justifiable. They represent, indeed, opposite swings of the historical pendulum. There are optimistic ages and there are pessimistic ages, times when the tide of life runs high, periods when the pulses beat low. Nations in their full vigour are optimistic; on their wane they see the sky all dark. Now it is hardly to be believed that the estimate of vast bodies of people as to the worth of their life is illusory; difficult to believe that when life is prized there can be an excess of painful consciousness. On the other hand, when a people welcomes as a Saviour one who promises, not luxury and

enjoyment, but merely inward peace, a paradise, may be, in the clouds, but not a paradise in the present, it is difficult, I say, to believe that with such a people life is full of surplus satisfaction. But the very same people are now optimistic, now pessimistic. They are optimistic in the noon-tide of their career, when victorious over their foes and conscious of increasing might; pessimistic when the heel of a strange power is upon them, when they have nothing they can call their own, and when the future outlook is wholly dreary.

Now so far as the question of Optimism and Pessimism is a practical one for us, it resolves itself into this—Are the conditions which favoured the optimistic belief of former ages extant or likely to recur? or is the fate of future mankind more likely to be assimilated to that of the downcast periods, when Denial of Life seemed the only true wisdom, for affirmation of life meant merely more anguish? If youthful nations are optimistic and aged nations pessimistic, is the like true of terrestrial evolution as a whole? and supposing the Past of the world, which we called its youth, to have been predominantly optimistic, will the Future of the world, which

will represent its declining years, be predominantly pessimistic?

Supposing, that is, we stand now at the mid-point of the world's career, should we do well in hugging the thought "there is a good time coming," or not better in gazing fondly back to "the good old times"?

We seek in the story of the slow ascent of the animal to Man for light on this question, and the answer is too uncertain to avail us much. We are too removed from the mere animal consciousness to take its dim revelations as suggestions save with respect to the worth of our lowest sensuous life. We turn to the story of our own race, but the light we get is no steady one. True we find with the growth of knowledge old hindrances to pleasurable feeling being removed, with increasing sympathy old animosities dying out and less hard bargains driven; but on the pleasure side there is also much missed—the primitive delight in first impressions, the boundless credulity of innocence, and the utter absence of a suspicion that we may be "fools of fate." History seems to suggest that sensuous pain merely disappears to make way for intellectual pain; that that which at first has power only

to kill the body afterwards has power to kill the soul; that the price of loftier satisfactions must be, as it has been heretofore, crucifixion of all spontaneous desires, and a crown of thorns the necessary antecedent of posthumous laurels.

Clearly, then, we are driven to some other, and we trust less uncertain, oracle. Where shall we find such? If the Ages will not speak articulately, who will show us if there be any good? There are two sources yet unexplored. We have to ask, first, what does our own personal experience testify? Here we seem to come to the very fountain-head, for the ledger of my own life, supposing it to have been carefully kept, should reveal something particularly certain as to my prospects. And then, should that prove treacherous, we have our last appeal—an examination of the very conditions of pleasure and pain themselves, a scrutiny of the essence and limits of activity and will. With that we reach the confines of Experience, and if the oracle of the Soul's own nature be dumb, we shall get no answer to our anxious questioning, though we listen at the door of the World-temple through all the watches of the longest night.

III.

THE TESTIMONY OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

THE evidence hitherto adduced with a view to arriving at a conclusion as to the Worth of Life, although loose and fragmentary, has one eminent merit, that, while liable to misinterpretation by the jury, it is proper evidence in being report of fact. The habits of animals, the varied activity of mankind, as regarded by cool and careful observers, afford, as far as they go, materials on which to found a sound judgment. The only, but very serious, drawback lies, however, in the clause *as far as they go*; for unhappily they are at once extremely imperfect, and require the appraiser to be something more than the conscientious collector. Their quality of objectivity is fatal to their sufficiency, and even if their value were much greater than it really is, would still have to be supplemented by another

species of evidence. All psychological phenomena, whether embodied in actions or institutions, are like the characters of a written language, which are insignificant save to him who has mastered its alphabet. History is a dead letter without the key of our own experience, and the multifarious doings of its subjects are but the play of aimless puppets to a being whose self-knowledge is too slight to permit of a probable conjecture as to how the strings are pulled.

Directly, however, we seek to interpret this mass of externally presented experience by the light of our own consciousness, we are liable to all those warping influences that Bacon and other chroniclers of the sources of fallacious judgment have pointed out, are prone to see the evidence through distorting glasses whose perverting force we may be unable to estimate, or of which we may be wholly unconscious. What we need is a pure transcript of Fact, and registration precisely quantified of the pleasurable and displeasurable feeling of all sentient life, and yet there is no man who does not possess a "personal equation" in his native temperament, which has to be allowed for before his observation can be recorded. But

quis custodiet custodes? Who shall criticise the critic? Where is our pure and incorruptible judge? Who is he who shall raise the claim to have emancipated himself so completely from all the tendencies of his age and race with their peculiar bias as to pass for the flawless mirror in which the feelings and desires of mankind are reflected precisely as they are? And if by severe self-scrutiny and almost superhuman self-restraint we have freed ourselves from these innate or acquired prejudices, we are still a long way from fulfilling the requirements of a perfect critic or perfect witness. To judge, we must not only be free from prejudice, but possessed of quick perception and large sympathies; and where it is the world's biography that is to be estimated, we seem to require a nature so complex and possessed of so many-sided an experience that our discussion seems almost doomed to a sudden collapse.

Our ideal judge, in fact, remains ideal. A perfect critic of the joys and sorrows of the *world* will never be found. The verdict we look for must be collected from a mixed and numerous jury, a jury comprising men and women of every social grade, and of

every national type. This self-elected jury as the world goes on will from time to time formulate its judgment, and with ever closer approximation to accuracy. A part of the evidence which that jury must hear and appraise is the testimony not of collective man but of individual experience, and that is the evidence to which I wish now to direct the reader's attention. What do men and women themselves say as to the pleasure-value of their own experience, allowing if possible for the "personal equation" of a propensity to exaggerate either the light or the dark side?

A very obvious difficulty will at once occur, viz., that experience is largely dependent upon the special circumstances of the individual's lot. How, it will be asked, can personal experience go for much unless that experience be a typical or average expression, and how shall we be assured that such is the case? The difficulty looks formidable, and yet on closer approach a large part of it vanishes. There is an old belief, and there seems much to corroborate it, that happiness and unhappiness are not limited to certain conditions of life, that the peasant's cottage and the monarch's

palace may equally be the abode of joy or sorrow. The observation seems true, for all experience requires the co-operation of both factors, the inward and the outward, and a healthy and hopeful temperament will find satisfaction in the most confined surroundings, while a sickly and melancholy disposition will droop in the midst of the profusest luxury. What would, however, be fatal to testimony of the kind we are considering would be the working in the same direction of exceptionally favourable or unfavourable inward and outward factors,—an unusually well-developed physical and mental constitution and extremely fortunate life-circumstances, or miserable bodily and mental endowments and a depressing environment.

It will not be so very difficult to ignore these extreme cases, and to accept our evidence only from those who partake of the “common lot.” Further qualifications have, however, to be made. We must assume that the characters are equally impressionable and equally capable of preserving a pleasurable or a painful record in memory. We shall also give more weight to the testimony that is largely corroborated than to that which is rendered by superior but rare

natures, whose very superiority may be due to an over-balance of faculty in certain directions. I think it would be unwise to lay too much stress on the revelations of "genius," as unwise as it would be to accept the testimony of low and unprogressive natures.

Well, having endeavoured to secure delivery of a typical testimony, can we shorten the evaluation process, for details are endless? Can we put our fingers on any general statement that may be taken as representative of a great mass of feeling or the life-current? There is one such expression of opinion which seems to be above suspicion, and to condense a good deal of life-experience, and that is *the desire of, or aversion to, a continuance of existence*. If the prevailing experience of a fairly long life has been bad, a man nearing its termination should rejoice in the thought that the tragedy will soon be over; or if that experience has been pleasurable, he will indulge the hope of a similar, or still fairer, future.

Such a case is hypothetically presented by Von Hartmann. "Imagine some one who is no genius, but a man with the best general culture of his time, endowed with all the other good things of an enviable lot, in the most

vigorous years of manhood, who is fully conscious of the advantage which he enjoys over the lower orders, over uncivilized nations, and over his fellows of ruder ages, and by no means envies those above him tormented by all sorts of discomforts spared to himself—a man who neither has been exhausted and rendered *blasé* by immoderate pleasures, nor has ever been crushed by exceptional strokes of fate. Now let us imagine Death to draw nigh this man and say, ‘Thy life-period is run out, and at this hour thou art on the brink of annihilation; but it is granted thee if thou wilt, once again, precisely in the same way, to go through thy now closed life with complete oblivion of all that has passed. Now choose!’”¹

This philosopher fancies the answer would not be doubtful. He thinks it certain that no sane being would wish to re-live his life, and draws therefrom the inference that its pleasure-value is held by the calm judgment to be negative. An optimistic critic of considerable acuteness agrees with Von Hartmann as to the choice of the man in the hypothetical instance, but refuses to draw the inference suggested.

¹ See my translation of Hartmann’s “*Philosophie des Unbewussten*,” 1884, vol. iii. pp. 4, 5.

Yes, says this writer, the man would prefer extinction to an exact repetition of his former life, because that which constitutes the spice of life would be removed, the excitement of expectation where all is unknown. And he adds, "If at the end of his life-career a man had the choice between dying and a new *unknown* life-career, say on another planet, which would offer him at least as much suffering as the old life, he would decidedly choose the latter, supposing that weariness of life did not outweigh the desire of continued existence."¹ And he goes on to say that if a man knew to the smallest detail what would happen to him in a further life he would lose all desire for it, even if there were the prospect of not yet experienced joys and sorrows.

That the case proposed by Hartmann admits of the explanation just cited seems to show that the testimony appealed to is inadequate to furnish a short cut to the estimate we are in search of. The desire for Immortality of course counts for nothing, as that desire has only been felt when there has been a tacit

¹ "Freud und Leid des Menschengeschlechts," eine social-psychologische Untersuchung der ethischen Grundprobleme von G. H. Schneider, 1883, p. 80.

supposition that the Future will be better than the Past ; the desire for Extinction is too rare a phenomenon to be used in evidence. I imagine the true state of the case to be that on the average a man craves continuance of life according to the fulness of his powers. If he has had a vigorous and healthy life, another scene of activity seems to him a most desirable thing ; if his life-powers have always been at a low ebb, he is content to sleep into oblivion. In other words, I do not regard the eagerness for, or indifference to, life to be usually founded on an estimate of Life's worth. I look upon the estimated Worth of Life as at present only an embryonic guide. It is rather an ideal motive that will guide the rational actor of the future than that which has swayed the convictions and hopes of former men and women.

The more I turn the matter over in my own mind, the more difficult does it seem to me to get an accurate profit and loss account out of personal testimony. And no wonder, when we consider what the conditions of any personal testimony are, unaided by an unbroken and unimpeachable record. The testimony we are striving to get hold of is a testimony dependent on memory. Now in no department of mind

is memory so treacherous as in that of Feeling. We remember with almost the vividness of first impressions perceptions of Nature, the positions of objects, scenes and events in which we have played a part; but feelings simultaneously experienced we can recall either not at all, or only in a very faint degree. We have a distinct recollection that some circumstance was attended with exquisite pleasure, we shudder at the mention of a certain incident; but the pleasurable and painful consciousness then had cannot be revived. When we appeal, then, to memory to tell us whether we have had more joy or more sorrow, what sort of answer do we get? An answer more or less truthful according to the train of thoughts that the forces of association reproduce. The revival can only be partial by the very circumstances of revival themselves, for it is beyond our power to call up what ideas we will. Does it not seem, then, a mockery to lay any stress on a person's assertion as to the relative amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction he has experienced in his life whether long or brief? Nothing short of a day by day—I might almost say an hour by hour—registration of transient feelings would

make the method of personal self-observation scientifically valuable.

Now not a few people (especially young people) have taken the pains to keep a journal of their doings and thinkings for some period of their lives, but the keeping of this familiar diary is child's play compared with the journal we desiderate. The journal here required must extend over the greater part of life, and is to be not a record of obvious events or intellectual reflections, but a record of all the shifting moods, and a careful discrimination of what Bentham terms pure and impure pleasures and pains. The very eagerness to catch the faintest signs thereof would defeat its own object, and the result would probably be that there would be no feeling to record, save when some powerful and sudden impulse swept us off our feet, and then the recording pencil would be laid aside till a calmer hour supervened, *i.e.*, until memory had already begun to exert its distorting power.

I will not, therefore, expend any further words on personal testimony. The value of autobiography, as of history, is not as supplying data on which to found a theory, but as controlling and corroborative of theory. In

short, the empirical (or inductive) method which proceeds to collect facts, and then to draw general conclusions from them, is in the present case really unscientific. The only sure method is the deductive method—to consider the conditions of feeling in general, to study the nature of volition; when the appeal to experience, whether on the small or the large scale, private or public, will serve as verification or correction. I pass, therefore, to a consideration of the conditions and laws of Feeling, and to an examination of the nature of Willing.

To ask for the conditions of an ultimate mental phenomenon is not of course to ask for what are its efficient causes. To ask what Pleasure and Pain are before they become Pleasure and Pain is to propose a futile question. Pleasure and Pain are ultimate facts of consciousness. We have mental moods in their absence, and the same intellectual fact may at one time be attended with feeling, at another time not; but we cannot resolve the quality of feeling itself into anything more elementary. With a certain quantity of objective stimulation a sensation may become pleasurable, at a further stage painful; but the characters of mere sensation, that preceded

the sensation become pleasurable, are not the generators of the pleasurable quality, are not causally related to it, but only its time antecedents. If we ask, then, what is the origin of feeling, we can only mean, Under what circumstances does feeling arise? To answer even this question satisfactorily is not so easy as it might seem, but that answer, whatever it may be, is the utmost we can get.

In the first place, then, there must be an irritable structure such as is found in the Nervous System of most animals, and an irritant, or physical stimulus capable of calling forth certain reactions in the special tissue. So far, however, we have merely the condition of Sensation in general, and Feeling is not Sensation. Now it is not easy to understand how a mere difference in the *amount* of stimulus should give rise to a heterogeneous psychical phenomenon, viz., Pleasure, and its contrast, Pain. The fact is so, however, as any child addicted to sweatmeats can confirm when a certain amount of saccharine matter gives rise to an agreeable taste, while beyond an undefined limit further increments cloy, and are succeeded by a distinctly displeasurable feeling that may pass into disgust. We note, further,

that Pleasure and Pain (and this is a very important point) are accompaniments of an enhanced or lowered vital activity. It would be a confusion of the physical and psychical to identify this vital phenomenon with the characters of Feeling itself; it is a concomitant and that is all. But (although sometimes by a roundabout path) it may be shown that maximum pleasure only arises when the emotional reaction is serviceable to the individual organism or the species, and maximum pain only when the reaction is detrimental to the welfare of the organism or the species. That is to say, pleasure is implicated with certain nervous processes, but not all pleasure intensifies life, or, conversely, pain depresses it. In the give and take, too, we must not look at the simple modification of consciousness and call the psychical phenomenon a state of pleasure without taking into account the whole sequence of connected feelings; otherwise intoxication would be life-furthering, or the trifling pains that are the incentives to fruitful exertions life-impeding. Pleasure and Pain are not mathematic points, as it were, but names for areas of feeling of greater or less extent.

This concomitance plays a great part in

Evolutionary Psychology, and is avowedly employed by Mr. Herbert Spencer to justify his very pronounced Optimism. Indeed, the doctrine of Evolution may be said to have given a new dignity to Pleasure and Pain, in raising them out of their apparent subjectivity, and assigning them an objective import.

So far we have only spoken of the conditions of what we may call absolute Pleasure and Pain—Pleasure and Pain, *i.e.*, dependent on permanent organic conditions. But there is another condition, which has regard to the Relativity of Pleasure and Pain, and which is especially important in the more representative forms of Feeling. It is this: The quality of Feeling is partly dependent on the abruptness of the new factor evoking it. It cannot be said that the same amount of stimulus will be followed by the same emotional reaction; the pleasure or pain felt will also be determined by the psychical condition at the moment of stimulation, and interrupted stimulation is necessary to keep feeling alive. To get the greatest amount of pleasure out of life would therefore involve the solution of the problem—what degree of intensity, and frequency of stimulation, will most call forth the activity of

the nervous tissue without over-exerting it? No pleasure without variety,—but what amount of variety and novelty will procure a maximum of satisfaction is a nice question. Progress and a certain constancy are therefore both psychologically justified, immovable conservatism and revolution psychologically condemned. The ideal life, emotionally speaking, is a life continually submitted to fresh influences, but fresh influences which permit a subsidence to a well-worn level. Ecstatic raptures and violent depressions must be paid for by prolonged prostration and unhinging of the system. When we have a scientific Art of Life, if ever we get one, this fact of Change as conditioning Feeling will receive more attention than it does at present. It will touch some of our serious social problems nearly when the fact is realized that, in proportion as a state (however originally pleasurable) is persisted in, it becomes indifferent, and that constancy and sameness of possession will not make a happy world.

The order of our inductive survey was the order of vital development. The Brute Creation, as the lowest form of sentient

existence, was considered first. The characteristic of animal feeling is that it is *presentative*, *i.e.*, that pleasure and pain only arise through the presence of an actual object. This lowest grade of feeling may be called *sensuous* feeling, to mark the fact that the emotional condition is the result of the reaction of the psychical disposition on sensorial excitation. It is assumed that at this stage there is little or no feeling in the absence of actual sensation. As we ascend the scale of animated existence, however, we have distinct evidence of ideation, *i.e.*, of the continuance of Sensation in the form of Idea, until on fairly passing the Brute boundary we find *representative* consciousness so habitual that a minimum of physical stimulation suffices to set agoing a vast amount of representative thinking.

This apparent supersession of Sensation by Thought is the most conspicuous and important fact of Mental Evolution, and it will occupy our attention a good deal later on. We are wont to translate Pleasure and Pain only too frequently into Sensuous Feeling, to associate those terms with the psychical modifications which occur when the antecedent is a physical stimulus, and very much of the opposition of

certain metaphysical schools to Hedonistic principles may be traced to this limitation ; but there is no reason why terms so expressive should be thus narrowed in their signification, especially when the difference to be indicated is one of degree and not of kind. The distinctions of Science are often extremely useful for facilitating the clear apprehension of facts, but they are often purely artificial, possessing only a didactic value.

Mind is one under all its forms, and however developed. As there is no thought without prior sensation, so there is no generic difference between those graded forms of psychical life that we call perception, imagination, conception. These terms mark degrees of removal from contact with external reality, but they are one and all grounded on immediate sense-consciousness, and in their varying ideational phases betray their sense-origin. A percept is an immediate sensation *plus* the traces of previous sensations, an image is the trace of previous perception, a concept is a selected portion of certain resembling images ; but the concept or thought cannot be kept steadily before consciousness except some image be substituted for it, and the image is

a pale transcript of the more vivid perception.

Now, as Feeling is the peculiar mental modification which accompanies the transition of our psychical states, if even the highest form of our intellectual activity cannot shake off the traces of its sense-origin, neither can the emotional accompaniments, and there must therefore in the most intellectual feeling be a remnant of the lowest form of pleasure and pain. I have hitherto said but little about these higher forms of Feeling, but not without intention. It would be a very maimed discussion of the worth of life that did not admit their vast and supreme importance, but I have thought it well for the drift of my examination to withhold an express consideration of them until I come to consider the Idea of Progress. The separation of the sensuous and intellectual feelings I admit is artificial, but I hope my proceeding will be justified by the sequel.

There are some more psychological observations of a general kind that I wish, however, to make before passing on to the next stage of my subject. What I wish to speak of now is the nature of Will, and the phenomenon termed Willing—one of the *vexatæ quæstiones*

of metaphysical psychology. The question is closely related to the discussion of Feeling, for in one view of the nature of Willing Feeling itself is incipient volition.

When conscious action has Feeling for its immediate antecedent, either actually or in idea, according to a well-known school, we have the phenomenon Will, and in the view of this school it is indifferent whether we say Will or Volition, for both are mental phenomena and nothing more. This view of the case is not, however, universally accepted. There have been thinkers of the highest repute who have regarded Will as quasi-substantial, have ascribed to it, that is to say—a permanent existence; and of course by so doing have carried it out of the domain of Psychology or Science of Mind, and relegated it to Metaphysic or Ontology, the sphere of Things in Themselves. This is a contrast of contrasts, it must be allowed, and we shall have no clearness in our thoughts on this matter unless we either attempt to reconcile these conflicting views, or put one of them out of court, for no third supposition is possible. “Will” is either synonymous with feeling-prompted action, or it is a somewhat

that is *in* all volition but not *of* it—an object of pure intellection, not a portion of our empirical knowledge.

The question of the nature of Will cannot be dissociated from that of the nature of Self or the “Ego.” If by Self be meant no more than the sum of relatively persistent conscious states, then a man’s will can mean nothing more than a selection of those states that do not terminate as mental states, but pass into embodied actions. To will in that case implies that, under certain conditions—the conditions that favour the manifestation of Feeling—the mental protoplasm, so to speak, protrudes its tentacles, and endeavours in return to modify the outer world which has previously given it its present shape. Volition completes the circle of psychical life. The world without affects us and occasions sensation, sensation of a certain degree awakens interest (feeling), and the attention is riveted upon the cause of the sensation, or initiates a movement designed for its abolition.

But if this account of things were complete, how would Mind obtain its Unity? This Unity of Mind must either be a borrowed image, or come straight from the original

source of life. The Unity of Mind may be a figure of speech derived from the empirical unity of the organism. As here we find a hierarchy of parts, lower and higher centres, all receiving commands from the supreme centre—the Cerebral Hemispheres—so we may talk of a hierarchy of mental faculties ; but what sense can we get out of such a notion, if a substantial Self be not postulated as a substrate ? Faculties of *what ?* we ask. Accordingly non-metaphysical psychologists at any rate refrain from using language so insignificant, and confine themselves to classed mental modes or states. But the difficulty itself, how is that met ? By the psychologists alluded to it is not met at all, only thrust on one side, consigned to the science of Metaphysics, and then not discussed there. I hold with these psychologists that the question is a metaphysical, not a psychological one ; but whether it be psychological or metaphysical, the question must be answered.

I myself confess to a view that has some good authority on its side, although it can hardly be pronounced fashionable. It has a Kantian look about it, but yet is not Kantian. It is this—that the Unity of Mind is a Real

Unity, but that the conscious mind is empirical and phenomenal. This applies to all our thoughts, feelings, and volitions, our percepts, and our cognitions. Hence the whole material universe as perceived by us, as known to us, is evanescent, is but your and my fleeting fancy, ideal, unsubstantial. But there is a permanent Reality beneath all this, not revealed in any objective form, incapable of being outwardly projected, subjectivity of subjectivity; and that Reality is the Universal Ego, and this is the only Ego that in strictness is Me.

With this view the question that remains is, How much meaning can we put into this Cosmic Ego? As much meaning as you can put into it without turning it into a conscious fact. Directly you apply to it the categories of the conscious understanding you degrade it to an objective fact, make it Thing, and no longer true Person. Now all philosophers that start from the ground of experience, if they think far enough, come at last to the ultimatum, that all that constitutes the material world is the manifestation of Power. Men of science with spiritualistic leanings come to this conviction. Our great scientific philosopher (to name one for many), Herbert Spencer, finds he

reaches herewith his last term of knowledge. But what is Power? what is Energy? Whence do we get the notion?

If Mr. Spencer had said Movement is the last word of Science, he might have rested with the assertion of his Unknowable. But Movement has no *dynamis*; it is as movement (and no more) passivity, a pictorial phantasmagoria. The only idea we can form of Power is our own *exerted energy*, and why stick at a word? Personal Energy is what most people have agreed to call WILL. I say Personal Energy, I do not say perceived adaptation of means to ends, I do not say conscious motive with sequent action or intention; I say merely an energizing that is my energizing, and as *my* energizing is Cosmic energizing.

I am not concerned to develop this ontology further now; I may return to it at a later stage. To my mind it is the one refuge from a degrading anthropomorphic Theism on the one hand, and a chaotic Phenomenism on the other. It is no new dogma. It is at least as old as that wonderful book the Christian Gospel of St. John, where those memorable words are put in the mouth of the typical Man, "I and my Father are one."

To descend from these transcendent heights. We were wafted into such speculative regions by an attempt to explain the relation of Will to the Ego, and the outcome is this, that Will is of the essence of the Ego—but an unconscious Will. Directly the Will becomes conscious, that is directly the Will is apprehended as energizing in this or that way, for this or that object, we can no longer talk of Will, but only of Volition. But now how are our Wills related to the pursuit of Life? Why do we will?

We ordinarily will, undoubtedly, to procure what seems a more agreeable state of feeling than that at present enjoyed. As long as our state is that of perfect indifference we cannot will, for there is total absence of motive. And this may be a suggestion to us when we come to imagine what is the Significance of Existence, or what was the first motive of the World-Will. But we may pass that question now, and only ask whether, in saying that Will is always set agoing by feeling, we have said the whole truth. We have not said the whole truth unless we account Impulse as a mode of feeling. When we affirm that there must always be a motive for voluntary action, we must in-

clude in "motive" organic impulses, or those connate appetites or desires of which I spoke in the last chapter. And the energy put forth through this organic urgency is, after all, the most important part of an active life. Prior to experience, Impulse must be the motor force ; it is only at a later stage, when we have learned to estimate the pleasure value of various ends, that we can deliberately will to enhance a present feeling.

There is a view that regards Pain as the original sentient state, and its removal the object, but vain object, of Will,—a view as old as Plato, but developed most fully by Schopenhauer. According to this theory, Will is synonymous with limitless craving—were we satisfied we should not will, or will only because we want, and want is pain. This is not true unless pleasure that is sought to be enhanced (and therefore not fully saturated pleasure, as we may say), be rightly termed pain. It is perfectly true that Man is never contented, even though he attain the fruition of long and vehement desire ; but it is quite another thing to say that there is no volition save where there is felt pain. To make pain in this way an absolute positive is as great a

perhaps positive pain

fallacy of relativity as to make pleasure a sole motive and end of action. Pain and Pleasure are equally positive, and equally negative, and they are alike the antecedents of action.]

The last question to be asked is—Is Will really rational or irrational? Is this aim of the will to procure pleasure or abolish pain a practicable one; or does more willing mean, not procuring greater and greater bliss, but rather drinking more deeply of the cup of bitterness? The optimist assumes the former; the pessimist, Indian or Teutonic, the latter. Is Will rational or irrational? To say that the Will is rational must mean that it is for the sake of somewhat that explains the volition; to say that it is irrational must mean that will is mere blind energy, that it possesses no self-illumination, or has no attendant genius to direct it.

The Metaphysical theory of Will must stand or fall by its conformity to psychical experience, for the Law of Will cannot be inharmonious with the facts of Volition. On the one hand we have the statement that Life is good, and that fully enlightened Will implies perfect Happiness; on the other hand it is affirmed that Life is evil, and that a fully enlightened Will means a perception of the vanity of all

endeavour. Here and there we find a few who have come to the conclusion that all striving is vanity, but they are undoubtedly largely outnumbered. That does not, however, prove that the world has been in the right. It may be that the human race has been under some strange delusion. There seems to me only one way left for us to come to a judgment on the matter, and that is to exhibit the will in action in relation to the various pursuits of life. Let us see whether the various ends that absorb the activity of mankind are ends that are adapted to bring a preponderance of pleasure or of pain. If it shall appear that in all or a majority of instances the labour expended is not adequate to the fruit obtained, we shall be justified in affirming the World-Will to be non-rational; while, if it should appear that the prize obtained is worth the struggle, or still more that much of so-called labour is itself pleasure, we shall be ready to affirm that the source of all Existence is rational, and that to carry on the work of creation in the same hope is to be in harmony with the Universal Essence.

The review of the aims of human life will entail an investigation of that term which we

of the Modern world hold so dear—Progress ; and having completed this investigation, we shall either be in a position at once to come to a conclusion as to Life's value, or be compelled to sink our shafts still deeper, and try to find on what this life of Feeling is really bottomed ; unless, indeed, a basal rock be beyond human fathom, or be even a figment of our undisciplined imagination.

IV.

THE TALE OF PROGRESS.

WE are becoming familiar with the idea that the only true record of the experience of our race is to be found in the constitution and character of its living members. No paleographer need complain that his materials are insufficient, that the prints by which the footsteps of the Colossal Man might be re-traced have been obliterated. The treasures of early Art have not crumbled, but are only buried, and there is no riddle of the historic ages beyond the wit of a patient Œdipus. Nothing has been lost, the anthropologic archives have no unfilled niches, and the ruthless finger of Time can blot out no page of the great story. This is a truth, I say, becoming familiar to us as a verbal proposition, although we are still far from having assimilated it as a vital element of our spiritual growth. It is easy to say our fathers live in

us ; it is far from easy to have a vivid consciousness of the full significance of that marvellous fact.

One implication that I would wish to insist on now is this, that, as present life is the summation of all past life in the line of its special transmission, there is a fixity about our physical and mental structure and function vastly in excess of our volitional freedom.

It always affects me with profound surprise when I meet with persons who conceive the doctrine of Indeterminism to be a matter of practical moment. Supposing such an incomprehensible spontaneity to be a property of our naked wills, how infinitesimal its outcome compared with the vast amount of necessitated action ! To emphasize this vanishing fraction of original liberty is like saying to an unfettered man immured in a thrice-barred dungeon, " You have no shackles on your hands and feet, you are a free citizen of the universe, seeing that when you please you can walk to every point of the compass : why declare that you are under constraint ? " Would not such an address to a confined captive seem a mockery of rhetoric ; and is it other than a metaphysical mockery when a philosopher declares to a man of this

nineteenth century that he is a free agent? Free! Yes, free to keep my place at the mill-wheel, or be lashed by the driver's whip; free to lift my foot a few inches lower or higher, since the generations of shapers of my destiny deemed such matters too indifferent for the engraining of a habit;—but the pace of the tramp and the extent of the tramp have long been settled, and hardly have I option left to lay me down and die. If there be a species of freedom left to us, it is at best the freedom to *die*—never to live, nor even to choose the fashion of our life.

“You have only to will,” says the reformer, the educator, the preacher, “and you may be progressive citizen, sage, saint,” or what not. Only to will! Just exert that billionth part of an ontical free-will that resides somewhere in the dim depths of your soul, and you will be a new creature! Dreams, verbiage, worse than “wild and hurling words;” for, if there is one thing that thrusts a man down into a lower deep, it is the fancied possession of this preternatural power, with the inevitable recoil, when the hour of baffled effort arrives, of exaggerated impotence. More wisely would preacher and professed philanthropist do to seek to cover

up from sight the mysterious springs of action. Touch the will we cannot directly, we can only indirectly change the conditions under which will is called into operation ; and if the world is to be bettered, it is by the slow sap and mine of base inherited habit, or the induction of new surroundings calling forth long dormant forces.

The bearing that all this has upon our question is that, when we talk of Progress, we talk of something that is practically pre-determined. For my own part I entertain no sort of fear of the consequences of our becoming fatalists. On the contrary it is, I think, the very best thing that could happen to us. What has retarded the world has been pre-eminently this idea (now happily somewhat fading) that each man holds his fate in his own hands. Hence the belief that to listen to eloquent sermons, and make good resolutions, is more important than to master the conditions of health ; that to put a ball in a ballot-box supersedes the necessity of studying the cause of the rise and fall of nations ; that to draw up model constitutions, or pass laws enacting equal distribution of wealth, is to introduce a millennium of civil peace, and make the world sober and prosperous. No, Pro-

gress is not effected by these winged and short methods. The spirit of the tiger and fox in us is not killed in a day, nor the love of personal domination, nor the envy of others' excellence.

Much of well-meaning current Radicalism is entangled in the illusion indicated. The temptation is doubly strong for those who descry an ideal that is far in advance of the existing world of practical fact to jump to the conclusion that the political power should and ought to be wielded in the service of this ideal. But surely history has been written in vain if these visions are to become guides for practical statesmen. Abstract rules of right are the authors of blood-stained strife and the parents of injustice; and it might even be shown that the humanest of men have not unfrequently unwittingly been the world's most dangerous foes. Abstract principles and glowing ideals are for the nourishment of the private intellect and heart; they are out of place in the sphere of private and public conduct. The ablest statesman is he who understands most thoroughly the stream of tendency of his nation's life, and sees in this organic *nisus* the prompting to fill a place in the world-evolution

that is rationally beyond human logic ; not he who is fascinated with the dream of a "new departure" in which War and Conquest are unknown. The nation that bids fair to survive is the nation that strives to a larger life from the centre of its own nationally-coloured aspirations. Progress is evolution, and only evolution.

Unhappily, however, the evolution of one individual or nation cannot always be harmonized with that of another ; the progress of the one may be antagonistic to the advance of the other ; and hitherto this has been not the abnormal, but the normal case. This, too, is a principle which is frequently missed by the non-evolutionary philanthropist. Harmony of interests, whether on the small or the large scale, is an ideal of very remote realization, presupposing vast changes of personal or national character, which prematurely attempted would arrest progress, not on one side only but on all sides. So far as we can at present see, conflict is an essential condition of advance to a higher platform in every sphere, and in every sphere is attended with terrible suffering. It is surprising how sentimental people can grow over a few battles with savages who can hail with rapture the march of science and the extension of com-

merce,—with entire oversight that, while in the one case a few brief physical pangs are endured, in the other cases the bitter and undying sting of intellectual defeat or lacerated hearts is the summary of the battle. But we readily picture in imagination those bodily wounds, and do not hear that silent anguish of the soul which is *not* stilled by speedy death.

Conflict there is, and must be, in the physical, the intellectual, the moral sphere,—is there no bright side of the picture? Yes, conflict is the condition of better life for future generations. Without conflict—to borrow the style of Hobbes—existence remains “poor, nasty, brutish.” Without conflict no law, no science, no sympathy. Conflict lies at the root of Civilization. But then the end must justify the means. And how are these to be justified? By their being the only ones available *under the circumstances of the case*. And the End itself—what is that? There is but one—the Perfection of the Race.

The followers of Comte are fond of proclaiming that objective individuals are nothing, that Humanity is all. I wish they would understand the full force of their own doctrine.

Humanity is all, and the individuals are only the bricks that help to build the temple ; but where the bricks are lavishly provided, while the temple itself has its very definite æsthetic limits, why be so concerned that the bricks of poorer quality are rejected, and only find their use in being passed again through the furnace, and shaped anew in finer moulds ? To insist upon the preservation of uncivilizable races is as if we should demand that a human body should rather go on growing indefinitely in bulk at the expense of its development in differentiation of parts. Humanity is an organism. It can not assimilate all sorts of food. It should not attempt to do so. It has to grow to the stature not of a hundred-headed Titan, but to that of a single-brained and finely-proportioned Man. What matters it, in short, whether ninety or a hundred millions exist on the earth's surface, if the ninety millions serve the development of the Organism better ?

But the method is cruel, it may be said. Maybe. We have not yet come to the Hedonistic balance-sheet. Had there never been cruelty in the sub-human world, we men would never have existed on this planet at all.

But why prolong the agony? What is this Perfection which claims such frightful victims? Is it anything but a new Shiva or Moloch in disguise? The question is asked and must be answered. I answer it with a clear negative. The difference between the holocausts offered to those mythical Deities and to the new Lord is the whole difference between sacrifice for a projection of human hopes and fears, and sacrifice for a Reality which is rooted in a Higher Life and Thought than the Human. "But all sacrifice may be foregone." Certainly—for *the price*. The price is simply this—spiritual stagnation; the sleep of the intellect, shallowing of the heart. We might live peaceably with all men on two conditions—that we cut ourselves off from the larger life of the world, and that we submit to sink into the tolerated drudges of superior races. But it may be answered, "We are not condemning Sacrifice altogether, we are only condemning unnecessary sacrifice. There is the true sacrifice of self-surrender, and there is compulsory sacrifice. The former is god-like, the latter is fiendish." Ah! if the world waited for voluntary sacrifice I fear the car of Civilization would make but slow

progress indeed. The sacrifice that is *voluntary* is usually the sacrifice that is *least* wanted. The sacrifice the world needs is the sacrifice of those whose egoism (unconscious it may be) blocks the way to a higher life.

Of course it makes all the difference in the world in what spirit the victims are laid on the altar, and the sacrificiants should be fully aware of the responsibility they are assuming—important considerations that are alas! too often slurred. But the question itself must be cleared of these secondary matters, and discussed as a question of Terrestrial Teleology; and I think that those who have once realized the conception of Humanity as an organic whole will find themselves unable to reject the consequence, that the development of this organism necessitates a continual elimination and destruction of parts that no longer subserve the welfare of the whole. The difficulty, of course, is to determine what branches of the tree should be lopped, in order that the tree may grow more healthily; and it is not always clear in whose keeping this problem is most safe. With regard to international politics it is the standing dilemma—whose judgment is truest, that of the

people or the rulers; of the many, incarnating the Spirit of the Age, child of the Past, but half-blind and under the sense of no responsibility; or of the few in power, who may have clearer vision, but who are exposed to the temptations of private ambition, and the narrowing influence of professional maxims?

But, as I remarked in a former chapter, the political sphere is not the only one in which there is a drawback to the gains of success. Indeed, in thinking of the world's future the political sphere is of least account, for the direst conflicts for political power between nations belong to the Past, and the debit account has reached a figure compared with which that still to be recorded must be insignificant. Whether the like is to be said of the Industrial domain is not quite so clear. The struggle for subsistence is severe, will continue to be severe, but whether it will become severer is not altogether certain. It is not certain even if the conditions supposed by Malthus are fully maintained, for science has thus far kept pace with the struggle for subsistence, and I see no reason why it should not continue to do so. The solution of the problem requires a much fuller insight into

the chemistry of food than we at present possess, but there may be counter agencies at work which will stave off the evil day predicted by the Malthusian Cassandras, and the toil now undergone for bare sustenance not be increased. Will it become less, however? That raises of course the question—what effect a more equal distribution of wealth will have upon the hours of toil [supposing population to be arrested at a certain stage, for of course if there be no such arrest, no system of distribution could do more than give starvation wages to a planet of paupers]?

Despite confident assertions on both sides, it does not seem to me that we have sufficient data to justify prognostication as to the economic effect of compulsory Socialism. Hitherto, undoubtedly, inequality has been the great stimulus to production and accumulation. No doubt the process has been also wasteful, for hireling work does not favour a maximum of production. But whether Socialism (which will also imply task-work) will be attended with better results, as far as total production is concerned, is not clear. It seems to me more than questionable; for the eagerness for wealth is a stimulus to invention, and to the

discovery of labour-saving processes, that would find no encouragement under a Socialist system. And if the maximum production was considerably less, notwithstanding an equal distribution on the surface the result would not be very different to what obtains now ; for although the great possessor of wealth has the power to consume his wealth, in point of fact he only consumes a relatively small portion, the rest going to labourers of divers kinds through indirect channels.

It is impossible, however, to be blind to the fact that the drift of economic thinking is markedly taking a socialistic direction ; and, despite powerful arguments in favour of the existing system, will perhaps prove irresistible. But there is a more excellent way to foster the Socialist aspirations than by the method of wholesale social reconstruction, a way indeed that in this country at least will probably be followed, viz., to foster co-operative enterprise, whether productive or distributive, and socialize our intellectual and æsthetic wealth.

A step in the right direction would be the purchase by the State or municipalities of all works of general utility that are at present monopolies of private companies, the support

of a certain number of schools wholly out of local rates, and practical recognition that Recreation is a necessity of public well-being. In some such ways society will get accustomed to the idea of a community of possession. There can be no doubt that private possession is a lower ideal than that of property possessed in common. The egoism, which would appropriate wealth that by its nature might be public property, is condemned by a higher phase of conscience; as a proof of which I need only point to the unforced inclination of wealthy proprietors to throw open their galleries of paintings or their parks to general view or use. There can be little doubt that it will at some not very remote period be considered distinctly immoral to keep for one's own delight any good that by its nature is capable of being enjoyed by others. As this feeling grows the spirit of Socialism will become victorious without dispute, and a maximum social felicity be attained without the payment of the terrible price of a class war.

But as political peace is gained, and a nearer approach made to common possession of good things, does competition cease, and is the scope

of pain sensibly reduced? Hardly. The devastating ocean only retires here to renew its destructive work there. Hunger and thirst may be less felt, envy of superior wealth be diminished, the opportunity for dominion over men's bodies be removed; but the eagerness to outstrip others in less material walks of life, the heart-burnings that come of failure to win general admiration, the desire to receive the incense of praise at the cost of rivals, will not speedily die. On the contrary, the restless ambition of mankind, debarred from solid recognition of superiority in the shape of material wealth or political power, will strive only the more eagerly for orders of industrial merit—the laurel wreath on the capitol, the homage of a world that must always have its personal worship. Civil equality does not entail intellectual equality, a common possession of outward goods does not obliterate those natural inequalities that ages have established in heart and brain. If a *régime* of Socialism is going to increase the hours of leisure, as its ardent friends suppose, the already numerous class of people who fancy themselves “geniuses” and overstock the world with worthless literature and bad art will be

enormously increased, and all the meannesses and dishonourable tricks by which success is now endeavoured to be snatched in the commercial or political sphere will be transferred to these intellectual regions, and then *Væ victis* still.

But as the world progresses, men and women are going to be more *moral*. What a lack of insight to suppose the selfishness and jealousy defacing present existence to be a part of the nature of things, as it were, and not rather destined to vanish like the mists of morning when the sun is high in heaven! Morality will increase, doubtless. Ay, but "there's the rub." It is through Morality that the Pessimistic shadow grows so huge. What does Morality mean? More Happiness? Nay, negation of Happiness. The goal of Morality is indifference of Feeling, that Nirvana of extinction at once of pleasure and of pain, which must insensibly set in when there are no longer desires to be indulged and wrongs to be redressed, or occasion for sympathy. That, however, is the ultimatum, but there is the intervening stage of moral discipline.

By Morality I understand a growing disposition to refrain from possessing more of the

felicific conditions of life than can also be appropriated by others. The ideal moralist, on the negative side, subscribes to the Benthamian dictum, "Every one to count for one, and no one for more than one." This result will, however, only half satisfy the moral problem. It is the Individualist Ideal, negative, anarchial. It cannot be made a substitute for a complete Ethic.

No doubt the world is still very far from having risen to this moral height, but when it has fully realized it, it will only have half ascended the ladder of perfection. To leave every man in the enjoyment of *his own*, to frown on no indulgence that does not limit my power of similar indulgence, is a fine prospect; and no wonder the gain seems so great that those who have caught a glimpse of it deem it the saving gospel. But no one who reflects for a short time on Human Nature can harbour the delusion that herewith the social millennium were reached. Indeed, such an ideal was reached two thousand years ago by Epicurus in his cultured garden, when a few choice souls withdrew from the feverish endeavours of the more active world, and in a serene seclusion made for themselves an earthly

Eden. In fact, instead of our getting nearer this Utopian Independence, we are moving away from it. Every step of the world-progress is a step that is involving our life more with that of others, knitting for us ties, and increasing mutual dependence, to a degree never experienced before. While in early times the Individual was rendered insignificant by the visible Temporal Power, he is now fettered by the invisible omniscient and omnipresent Spiritual Power. Masters are changed, but we have still masters. Instead of King, Priest, Penal Law, we have our next-door Neighbour, Public Opinion, Social Ostracism.

But mere Individualism is not only impossible on account of Social Despotism, it is intrinsically inadequate, because the cementing forces themselves have engendered sympathetic feelings that have created a higher form of Conscience. The positive canon of Morality is: "Further the well-being of others to the uttermost. Do not rest content with the mere refraining from injury, but increase the positive good to the uttermost of your ability."

Now I shall not deny that there is a reflex satisfaction in conscious self-sacrifice, but it is surely flying in the face of experience to affirm

that the gratification of benefiting others at our own expense is a gratification in which the alloy of displeasurable feeling is not more than the gold of pleasure. But an ideal positive rule of Morality does not stop half-way; it enjoins the cultivation of beneficence to the limit of our power. I cannot accept the reading of the precept, "Love thy neighbour as thyself"—first get the maximum of indulgence permissible without infringing alien rights, and *then* procure an equivalent good for other men. That is the compromise of current morality, it is not the rule of exalted Ethical Principles. On the contrary, the finest ethical conscience knows no private interest that is not primarily public interest; no legitimate Egoism that is not a derivation of Altruism. Of course, however, I am speaking only of an ideal, but of an ideal which has already legitimated itself by receiving the lip-homage of multitudes, and is therefore destined to occupy an ever larger place in men's thoughts. But its very remoteness from the plane of thought of the natural man is a measure of its infelicitic character. Step by step renunciation, then, is the injunction of a rising Conscience. Either spontaneously, or at the bidding of a Spiritual

Power that will not be gainsaid, we must resign one joy after another, until at last the barren gratification remains to us that we have done our whole duty. And then ?

If Morality be one of the ripest fruits of consciousness, then the progress of Man is surely writ in bloody tears. But all has not yet been said. The surrender of transferable possession is but a small part of the sacrifice demanded by an exalted Morality. The greatest sacrifice is of a subtler kind, but from which, by the very necessity of intellectual development, we cannot escape—the intensifying of Sympathy.

There is such a thing as being elated by the signs of others' joy ; in the sum of feeling it counts for little, however, in comparison with the pain caused by the sight of others' distress. Now the more palpable ills of life will doubtless be removed by a more thorough understanding of the laws of the physical world, but human power of representing others' states of mind keeps pace with the driving inward of the causes of suffering. Progress shortly means—heightened imagination, and a stronger consciousness of social unity. To be more identified with others' mental life is accordingly

inevitable. We cannot reasonably doubt that, as our nerves become more finely strung, as we respond to slighter thrills of stimulation, we shall feel more acutely all the petty trifles that now never ruffle our serenity, that the distress we now pass heedlessly by will fascinate our gaze, and that the inward anguish which betrays itself by faint twitches of the features will touch us to the quick.

The Western mind is constitutionally inclined to identify Progress and diffusion of Happiness. The popular creed of modern Europe and America undoubtedly is Meliorism, or the belief in the continual increase of Happiness and a continual diminution of Unhappiness. The Oriental mind, on the contrary, seems to incline the other way, and to place its Paradise in the past, or to hug the hope that lapse of time will bring absolute and final Extinction. It cannot be said that either creed is founded on inductive premisses. Neither is due to a scientific estimate of the facts or causes of good and ill, but each finds its explanation in the evolution of its character as determined by physical surroundings. Our own "Meliorism" has in fact no better basis than a certain hopeful temper, engendered by the

necessity of a hard struggle for existence in climes where the resources of Nature have to be wrung from her by strenuous effort. Had the Western man not had boundless hope he would never have carried forward the work of civilization ; and this Hope, which has been the very condition of existence for him, it is which leads him naïvely to take a pretty picture of fancy for a logical demonstration.

Confident expectation, however, is not valid belief. Success always fosters the spirit of Hope, and Science has been ever proceeding from triumph to triumph—it has been the one element of life which has never retrograded—and it is not strange, therefore, that it should overrate its own achievements, and measure the worth of life by its own standard. But Science itself (save to a few highly intellectual minds) is not pleasurable ; it is means and not end. If my review of the items of Progress in this and a preceding chapter be just, Progress means among other things an enlarged opening for subtler forms of pain ; but has Science yet taken the measure of these new enemies, although it may have extinguished many old foes ? Science has discovered anæsthetics, but what Science have we that can minister to a mind

diseased? And yet, if refinement of feeling be a mark of progress, our regrets, our griefs, the wounds of conscience must require an ever more potent physician as time goes on. Science is an aid to comfort, feeds and clothes us better. Yes, and places us in a state of novel insecurity. A few evil-disposed men can suspend a Damocles' sword over a city of four millions, and in virtue of the achievements of Science. Does Science make men more thankful, less peevish, more magnanimous? Not at all. It provides eyes for the blind, but more instruments of deception for the wolves in sheep's clothing; more weapons to fight superstition, and more props to bolster up rotten causes. Accessories are not ends, and Science is only accessory. It affords opportunities, it cannot give the power to use them.

The Intellect is not the fount of Happiness—where shall we seek it then? In the emotional nature itself. In a more effusive friendship, in a genuine delight in little causes of delight, in a more complete response of kindred hearts. But alas! Progress betrays Man here too. Our feverish life is inimical to deep friendships. We have no *time* to cultivate a profound friendship. Domestic felicity, a source of great joy to

more simple ages, is troubled by new anxieties. The manifold aims of life do not allow the mind the necessary repose and concentration to enter into the full joy of a deep affection. Children are almost old men and women in their cradles, and claim an early independence that prematurely disintegrates the home. Lastly, it must be confessed that the broadening of feeling superficializes it; and a heart that would clasp the whole race in its arms cannot possess intensity enough to hold a single human being tightly to its breast.

And so the Triumphal Car of Progress rolls on, and the shouts of laudation come wafted back to the reflective listener sounding strangely like a familiar word, however the notes be varied, and that word is Illusion. Illusion to believe that Progress and Happiness are one, Illusion to believe that Ideal Hopes presage real fulfilments, Illusion to think that Satisfaction can ever be enduring, and to doubt for a moment that the preparation for the joy, with all its anxious flutter lest the joy be missed at last, far exceeds the fleeting rapture.

Whoever looks with dispassionate eye upon the world, I think, will come to this conclusion—that there has been no gain of happiness at

the cost of unhappiness, that every piece of purer or more refined satisfaction has been purchased by keener and subtler pain ; that as far as amount of happiness (relative to amount of unhappiness) is concerned, the answer must be negative to the question, " Is the doctrine of Meliorism true ? "

But if there be no increase in *amount* of Happiness relative to unhappiness, what significance can be assigned to increased quality of Happiness, in relation to increased quality of Suffering ? This, that whatever the gain, it has not been a gain expressible in terms of Feeling. I need hardly stay to argue out the position, almost universally accepted now, that pleasures and pains *as* pleasures and pains can only differ from other pleasures and pains quantitatively, not qualitatively ; that the seeming difference in kind is a difference not in the feelings themselves, but in their representativeness, their revivability, their accompaniments. What, then, is the significance of Progress if this be so ? This, that the intellectual part of man's nature has advanced, that Man is ever knowing more, and that his faculty of cognition grows with every fresh conquest ; but that his will, its aims and motives, remain

essentially constant, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Here in this sphere of Feeling and Volition there is ever the shadow with the radiance ; there in that province of Cognition only increasing blaze of light. Who shall say that we are happier than our less knowing forefathers ? Their cup of joy was as full as it might be under their conditions, as ours is now, but they certainly knew indefinitely less ; and, while we hope and trust with the lapse of time the cup of delight will reach many hands from which it has hitherto been withheld, we are clearly assured of the unlimited growth and diffusion of scientific truth.

Optimism and Pessimism should mean respectively that the universe is so constructed that there could not be more pleasure or more pain in it than there actually is ; that this is either the best possible or the worst possible of universes. Now, both of these positions are inept, for they require the critic to be elevated *above* the world, to be possessed, as it were, of an infinite number of designs for the formation of a world. Meliorism is an intelligible doctrine, and so is its contrast Pejorism—that Pain is encroaching on Pleasure, that the world is not getting better but becoming worse. [Paren-

thetically, I may remark that when people speak of Optimism and Pessimism they usually mean Meliorism and Pejorism; but as the former words have passed into popular use it is well to retain them, although they are less philosophically correct than the latter pair of terms.]

Pejorism rests on certain very doubtful positions, which I cannot do better than present in the summary of Von Hartmann. "Suppose," he says, "it lay in the nature of the will to produce, as it were, in the gross an equal amount of pleasure and pain, yet the proportion of pleasure and pain would in general be modified unfavourably to pleasure by the following five circumstances:—

"(a) Nervous fatigue increases the repugnance to pain, diminishes the effort to retain pleasure; thus increases the pain of pain, diminishes the pleasure in pleasure." [In other words, pain more persists in consciousness than pleasure, owing to an assumed property of nerve-tissue to prolong the effects of pain, and to deaden the effects of pleasure. The position is purely hypothetical; the facts of nervous exhaustion tell equally in both directions.]

“(b) The pleasure which arises through the cessation or remission of a pain cannot by a long way balance this pain, and of this kind is the largest part of existing pleasure.” [It remains to be proved that the largest part of actual pleasures are of this negative description, and if this be denied, the first half of the statement is robbed of its force. No one would deny that the remission of a prolonged pain is no equivalent for the preceding pain, but would the cessation of a prolonged pleasure neutralize the preceding pleasure?]

“(c) Pain thrusts itself on consciousness, which must feel it; not so pleasure, which must, as it were, be discovered and inferred by consciousness, and is therefore very often lost to consciousness, where the motive for its discovery is wanting.” [A supersubtle objection, which is hardly worth proving or disproving.]

“(d) Satisfaction is short and quickly fades; pain endures, so far as it is not limited by hope, so long as desire exists without satisfaction (and when does not such exist?).” [True enough, and sufficiently destructive of Meliorism, but insufficient to substantiate a doctrine of progressive misery.]

“(e) Equal quantities of pleasure and pain

united in a consciousness are not of equal value ; they do not compensate one another, but pain remains in excess, or the exclusion of every sensation is preferred to the questionable union." ¹ [In other words, we should prefer to have no sensations at all to having a sentient life half pleasurable, half painful. This is the very question at issue between optimism and pessimism. We must not dogmatically affirm that only one side *can* be taken. The fact that there are optimists and pessimists leaves the alternative open. But the question which must be argued is—supposing there is as much pleasure as pain procurable, which should reasonably be preferred—a continuance of sentient life, or a cessation of all consciousness ?]

That the world is getting worse, that is, that displeasurable feeling is increasing (relatively to pleasurable), is non-provable. What is provable is that, with every year of his existence, man is becoming more open-eyed, more self-conscious. Progress means the unfolding of consciousness, unfolding from the obscure germs of thought and feeling in the lower brutes up through long savage human periods to our present dim perception that the past has been a waking dream,

¹ "Philosophy of the Unconscious," vol. iii. pp. 73, 74.

on to the end of perfect self-knowledge, and a clear view of the whole course of mental growth. As *we* look back upon the long past, and call to mind its fierce struggles and fanatic aims, the prodigious waste of effort, the delusion of men who thought they lived in the Age of Reason, and yet often, in their absence of self-knowledge, frustrated their own aims,—so a future age will look back upon us as men stammering with thoughts we could not grasp or express, as men who were only in a little more advanced stage of the long dream called spiritual experience, and who still, like their fathers, knew not what they did. We cannot hasten that era of enlightenment; it will come in its time. It will come, not ushered in, however, with pæans of exultation as we ill-divining men of to-day imagine, as if the promised land had been reached at last; but with that silent pensive melancholy, which is the fruit of perfect knowledge and perfect sympathy—Humanity crowned King at last, the Man of Sorrows truly, but with the halo of self-conquest round his head.

V.

THE DATA INTERPRETED. SEARCH FOR ULTIMATE GROUNDS OF ACTION.

IN the last chapter I sketched in outline what I conceived to be the essential character of Human Progress. Being unwilling to confuse the main question with side issues, I did not think it necessary to dwell on certain obtrusive facts that would have relieved a somewhat sombre picture. It is easy enough to paint in attractive colours aspects of life and duty on which the genial mind loves to dwell. The pure pleasures of a well-attuned home, the gladsome meetings of congenial friends, the cheering spectacle of Nature's loveliness, the inspiring contemplation of great Art—do we not all know something of these benign and kindling influences? and is it within the power of the saddest cynic to scowl them into non-existence? They are facts as real, and, as I at least think, as extensive, as

those darker and saddening phenomena that make the discords in the terrestrial harmony. But if the truth be, as I believe it is, that for every joy there is a sorrow, for every hope a fear, then the riddle of Life is not made plainer by presenting a gross sum of our emotional gains; and it is the function of the poet, rather than of the philosophic critic, to describe in eloquent terms their innumerable varieties. Of more consequence is it for our present purpose to vividly realize the negative side; first because that side has been sedulously kept out of view owing to the optimistic character of our religious traditions, and secondly because it is only by resolutely turning aside to note the shadows, that we are enabled to free ourselves from that glamour with which ideal hope touches our eyes, disturbing our clear and steady gaze.

We started on our inquiry, be it remembered, with the object of discovering the worth of Life in terms of Feeling. Positive worth, we agreed, must mean surplus satisfaction; negative worth surplus suffering. We first took an inductive survey of accomplished facts of brute and human experience, and could find no ground for concluding that life was either prevailingly happy or prevailingly wretched. Next, inquir-

ing into the nature of Volition, we thought we had reason to conclude deductively that, whatever might be the world's destination, whatever sentient forms might arise, the relative quantities of positive and negative feeling would be unchanged. Desire leads to willing, and willing gives place to desire; but we saw no reason to assent to the assumption of Schopenhauer that unfilled Desire alone is positive, and its satisfaction a mere point of emotional indifference between two positive cravings. And at the close of the last chapter I also dissented from the view of Hartmann that pain leaves behind it a more indelible trace in memory than pleasure, so that even if the two are quantitatively equal there must be an overbalance of displeasurable consciousness. I have also examined the chief features of Human Progress, and the same conclusion seemed to emerge, viz., that with length of time pain and pleasure merely shift their ground, so to speak; that, although the crest of the pleasure-wave is ever attaining a greater altitude, the depression is ever profounder; and could light on no sufficient reason why this state of things should ever give place to another. Pronounced Pessimists talk loosely of ten new-born woes for

every abolished ill, and minds of a sanguine temperament think, if only they could have the shaping of affairs, poverty, disease, and ill-will could be wholly eradicated; but both the gloomy averment and the rosy-hued assurance seem to me tinged with subjectivity, to be unverified and unverifiable, and the systole and diastole of feeling to keep time with the perpetual system of life and death, evolution and dissolution, which is Nature's most general law.

What, then, is the gain of Progress if it is not hedonistic? Larger Faculty and concomitant larger exercise of faculty. A fuller life in all directions, in knowing, feeling, acting. Greater mastery of inorganic Nature, fuller comprehension of the World's Order, wider and deeper emotions, and higher and grander moral achievements through a minuter division of labour, and a more consentaneous social will.

But how fares it with *Life's Worth*? For the body politic to be conscious of more power is a grateful feeling to the collective soul,—can as much be said for the individuals who make up this corporate whole? They have, or may have, the exhilarating consciousness that they are members of an organism that is ever rising

to a higher rank in the scale of actual and conceivable organisms ; and they also partake of the birth-throes and the death-pangs of each phase of the developing organism. Each thwarted aspiration entails a fresh pang, each completed adjustment a fresh happiness, and so on to the end of the chapter, to the final stationary state.

Well now, here comes one last question : If Pain and Pleasure are destined to continue in unvarying proportions till Humanity has attained its final state of equilibrium, what is the value of the process itself, and how is the value of this process related to the value of the End ? (Mind I assume it proved now, and I cannot without wearisome iteration go over old ground again, that mankind will feel pain as long as they feel pleasure ; that pain itself will not vanish, but only special forms of pain, growing continually more subtle, more refined, more interior.)

If we say with the political Utopist that we are toiling and suffering now for the sake of a remote posterity, who will enjoy a paradisiacal felicity, how is the process justified ? We are considerably in the dark as to the period the lease of life allowed this planet has still to run ; but with what we know of past epochs, and

with even our present imperfect physical knowledge, it is scarcely possible to believe that that paradisiacal future (allowing it to be in store at all) will be aught but relatively brief compared with all antecedent history. And so this long, arduous, blood-stained ascent has been made in order that a few generations of men may sit down in contentment beside their vine and fig-tree, and sing hymns of gratitude to the long series of martyrs who have made their felicity possible! Surely that felicity, however pure, would not justify this frightful profusion of aching hearts, nor even the enhanced faculty of that golden Age, if that age be but the prelude to a slow but sure decline.

On the other hand, the Process itself cannot be its own justification. Why should I care to live if I have a moral conviction that no exertion of mine, or outward conjunction of circumstances, can make my expectation of happiness other than that stereotyped in the tables of Hedonic statistics, drawn up from the widest observation and experience? For the satisfaction, it may be suggested, of standing a little higher in the scale of intelligence. A poor satisfaction that, for imagination stings me with the thought of infinite possibilities, not to say

the idea of indefinitely grander actualities probably realized at this moment within the bounds of the Universe.

We are reduced, then, to this alternative: Either the Process is for the sake of a Transcendent End, or it is totally devoid of significance. Either, that is, the Object of Terrestrial Evolution must be sought in something that lies beyond and outside the Life of which we are cognizant; or the whole drama is planned by no author, enacted on an unsubstantial stage, and performed by phantom puppets. We have to deal with this alternative, and draw out the practical consequences.

Each member of the alternative admits of subdivision. On the supposition that Evolution is significant we may stop short with a proximate explanation, or press for an ultimate interpretation. If Existence be insignificant, the sequence of events composing our world may be either a mental fiction of the contemplating mind, or a real imbroglio, a cyclical play of objective atoms in real space and real time.

The simplest way out of the difficulty is that provided by the Christian Theology, that earth-life is only a part of the whole stretch of individual sentient existence. Physical death is

then only the shuffling off of a mortal coil, and accordingly, however great the suffering experienced here, it is of small moment in comparison with the sum of future bliss. If, further, the possibility of realizing such bliss be dependent on a certain kind of conduct in the present life, a motive is provided for a uniform mode of action which we may style moral. We have at once our theory of existence and our practical ethics.

Mr. Barlow, who has taken more pains than most English thinkers to understand the problem which is occupying our attention, in a brief but thoughtful essay, marked with great candour, styled "The Ultimatum of Pessimism," betakes himself to this venerable refuge usually treated with slight respect by recent philosophers.

In the view of certain Pessimists there are three stages of Illusion marking the degree of awakening from the optimistic dream. The first, the creed of the world's infancy, the belief that for each individual at some period of his career a vast amount of happiness is in store for him; the second, the mediæval idea of an ecstatic existence after death; and the third, that in which we are said now to be entangled,

the hope of a blissful existence in the flesh of our remote descendants on the surface of this planet.

Mr. Barlow thinks the first stage of the illusion undeserving serious consideration, and is so little a child of his time as to make light of the last stage. His own position is thus described: "The world behind the Veil of Isis—we may call it transcendent, intelligible, ontological, hyperphysical, supernatural, as we please—is wholly unknown. To lift the veil is Death. And in this unknown field there may be room for another life, sufficient to justify our continuance in the present, despite its load of sorrow. This is no proof of such a hyperphysical state; but, to meet the argument by which the Pessimists seek to make out the illusory character of the quest of happiness on the second stage, only possibility of such life is wanted, and this possibility we have got. We may remain in life as individuals, we may continue the species, we may develop culture—all, in the hope, not to be destroyed by physical analysis, that something better than to 'be blown about the desert dust, or sealed within the iron hills,' may be in store for us hereafter." ¹

¹ "The Ultimatum of Pessimism." An Ethical Study by James William Barlow, M.A, 1882, p. 102.

It is beyond a doubt that during the last half-century there has been a remarkable revival of the belief once entertained with the firmest conviction, but of late thrust very much into the background, of a personal existence after death. The Spiritistic movement will form a remarkable chapter, when it comes to be written, in the rich history of our time. The verdict of those exercising the widest influence on public opinion is undoubtedly unfavourable to the genuineness or objectivity of the pretended discoveries, but the prevailing scepticism of scientists has not been without notable interruption. The writer just quoted has evidently been impressed by that strange book "The Unseen Universe," although he adds the *caveat*, "It is better to admit at once the possibility of such essential heterogeneity between the future life and the present, that the former could not be conceived by us unless we were endowed with new and higher mental capacities." ¹

Whatever be the net result of the Spiritistic movement of the present century, one good at least has resulted from it, and that is that the question of a continued personal existence has been taken out of the hands of the priest, and

¹ "The Ultimatum of Pessimism," p. 106.

put into the custody of the scientific investigator. Why the doctrine of Immortality should ever have been the property of the theologians is not clear, but assuredly it will not be so henceforward. All the bated breath and twilight mystery that has been considered proper to this subject are at an end. If Immortality be a fact it is a fact of Physics, not a truth of inward intuition. It is no longer an esoteric dogma of churches, but a matter for the corporeal eye and the manual grasp. If continued existence be a fact of which man can take cognizance it is a natural fact, and evidence appreciable by the physicist must be forthcoming for it. Is there such evidence?

It is not difficult to construct theories of possible existence, to point to the all-pervading invisible ether, or frame ingenious hypotheses of bodies within bodies, after the pattern of the old astronomic cycles and epicycles. We don't want to know how the gap between the seen and unseen universe *could* be bridged, but whether it *is* bridged. Have we evidence that the "dead" *do* live on? Do the alleged "phenomena" only pass in the seeing mind, or are they facts of the objective order? Able men, few but of great scientific weight, testify

to objective realities, but they are not credited. The literature is ever accumulating of reports of spirit visitations ; obscure passages in the annals of bygone times are elucidated by contemporary occurrences ; and yet how small is the number of the credent ! Why is this ? Who doubts the other reports of tried investigators ? Nay, there is even a too great readiness to accept the alleged discoveries of Dr. A. or Professor B., as proved by the frequent failure to verify the assertions of ardent students. But although we may read book after book and journal after journal, may even be more familiar with ghosts than with our next-door neighbours, after a while the residuum of positive belief in the mind is found to be extremely small.

The reason is not far to seek. It is not the strangeness or rarity of the alleged " phenomena " that maintains this scepticism ; it is the enormous difficulty of *assimilating* the so-called manifestations. Spiritists (and I prefer the word Spiritist to Spiritualist to avoid confusion of thought) seldom seem to have an inkling of the vast consequences of their discovery if placed beyond the reach of doubt. You cannot expect me to credit a " fact " on your report,

unless you can show me how it can fit into the most stable part of the fabric of my ontologic creed. The modern world has moved away, even unconsciously to itself, from the view of the Universe that made belief in personal immortality a simple and natural thing to the mind of our forefathers. It is not that death seems the end of all things to the gross bodily eye, for that has always been so, and a modern materialistic science has given no greater force to the resumption ; it is that the Universe itself has assumed a shape in our minds that almost precludes the entertaining of the idea of individual existence after death at all. I make no rash assertion when I say that the Metaphysic which has underlain the superficial thought of the European world for two centuries has been essentially Monistic. Pluralism, it cannot be denied, is out of favour, and the attempt of some recent thinkers to revive that way of thinking has met with no considerable response. The reigning Metaphysic and the accepted Rational Physic are ever in close alliance, and we have but to look at the great generalizations of Modern Physics to understand why it is so hard for men and women living in the nineteenth century to go back

to ancient theories of a perpetual private soul.

Of course if the continuity of individual existence after death be Fact, it will in time conquer incredulity however stubborn. Before a single Fact the most universally accepted World-theory is essentially impotent. But to admit it will entail for most of us the fashioning of a new Heaven and a new Earth out of the ruins of an extinct spiritual universe. It will involve so great a change in our World-view that the motive for patient edurance, if it is to operate speedily, will certainly have to find some surer support than the bare "hope that something better" may be in store for us "than to 'be blown about the desert dust, or sealed within the iron hills.'"

Our drowning optimist will hardly successfully catch at that straw. But even if it be clutched tightly, would it avail him? Suppose death be but an incident in our vital career, a mere shifting of an external garment, how is the darkness relieved by such discovery? To what end this new dance of life? If the prospect of the Hereafter is to shape my conduct now, I must be taught what place that future world fills in the cosmic drama. The

utmost to be gained from the mere trust in a future existence is a perception of the folly of suicide, since death would only accelerate my entrance into an inevitable state; but, unless physical duration can be supplemented by a new moral truth, the knowledge of a future state leaves Life as much an unexplained phenomenon as before. Why should we struggle here? What prospect of anything better there? Whether it be heaven-ward or hell-ward that we wend, to greater bliss or greater anguish, the riddle of Existence is still unread—a future life solves no moral problem. And so, if we hope for enlightenment, we are driven on to the second division of one side of our alternative (p. 124)—the Ultimate and Essential Purport of Evolution.

It is only presenting the foregoing conclusion in another form when we say that the supreme motive for human volition must be a Cosmic Motive. A Motive limited to this planet we have already found insufficient. The life of this planet must be conceived as part of the Universal Life. But (if contemporary science is to be trusted) the life of this planet is discontinuous with the life of the rest of the Solar System, to say nothing of other Stellar Systems.

As this planet was once a lifeless ball, so will it be again ; and that long before its feeding star has spent its fires. And even if we pursue in imagination the future history of the dead globe we make no progress to enlightenment, for the rhythm of dissolution and evolution continues till all the energy be spent. We cannot escape, then, the other main alternative—an unintelligible Universe—unless we can get below the physical scene altogether, and find the key we are in search of within the world's own breast. But, before taking this tremendous step, let us briefly consider the alternative still to be noticed of a meaningless Universe.

Such a universe I said, may be either ideal or real (p. 124). *Ideal* if there be only Dream and no awaking, if all we call Time-Event, World, be but a mental construction, as flimsy as the thoughts flowing in our current associations, which even cease in profound sleep.

The *ne plus ultra* of this position is the Nihilism of Hume—the HEN KAI PAN a baseless bundle of Ideas. Descartes' *Cogito* is a talisman of sufficient strength to exorcise *this* spectre. *I think*—write that out in terms of “impressions” and “ideas ;” and when that

feat is performed it may be worth while to brood on this abyss of Nothingness.

But the Cosmic Process may be not an ideal but a *real* Dialectic — interminable real moments without meaning, inherently at strife. Or suppose the Content of the World to be not ideal flux but Will-energy, and yet Will-energy pure and simple, that is without a principle of direction, blind Force and nothing more — then the World is in essence unintelligible, eternal possibly, but a mighty maze of activity without a plan. In clear contrast with this is the supposition that the Universe is bottomed on Reason as well as the outcome of Will, is not a world of Chance, but of Law, Real and yet Ideal, God and Nature in indissoluble Unity.

What determines my choice between these two final antitheses is the impossibility of working with one of them. It is indifferent whether we read Essential Reality in a monistic or a pluralistic sense ; if the Essential Reality be non-rational in its inmost core then, I maintain, no meaning can be put into Science, and its fundamental conceptions, Law, Order. To conjure a Universe out of the rain of Democritean Atoms, or out of the blind Will

of Schopenhauer, is a feat beyond the power of any metaphysical magic. Law and Order imply Reason; and however you name your Ultimate, whether Matter, Atom, Will, if it contain no principle of Determination in it, there can result no Cosmos, only Chaos.

On the supposition that no other Ontology is acceptable than that which affirms a Rational World-Will, we have now to ask how the Problem of Evolution, and especially Cosmic Evolution, stands related to such metaphysical assumption.

It lies in the very notion of Will to have an End or Object; and a rational Will, as I took pains to show in the first chapter, can have as object only a vision of increased satisfaction or diminished dissatisfaction; and this, in the case of the unique World-Will, must be a vision of more *self*-satisfaction or of less *self*-dissatisfaction. If the world then is One, and we seem compelled so to think, *i.e.*, if all substantiality within it is a derived substantiality; to ask for the meaning of Evolution is to ask for a motive for the self-partition of the One World-Essence into its manifold forms—or, to speak in more precise terms, to ask for a statement of the relation of the One Essence to its

manifold forms, which shall supply Humanity with a terrestrial creed capable of supporting a practical faith that may guide and stimulate its action.

The Substantial Will of the World must have willed to either increase its pleasure or ease its pain. But to feel pleasure or pain at all we saw in the second chapter implied consciousness; therefore the World-Will must have been already conscious before it began to evolve a world. But consciousness implies contrast, implies succession, implies memory. The Substantial Will must then be already a Will in Time, must be already Will manifested, must be World. How can we find any reason here, then, for the passing of the World-Will into activity, for the commencement of Evolution itself? We may explain one phase of the evolution by reference to a later phase, but the reason of the Evolution itself is beyond our powers. This seems to me the deadlock in which those are involved who seek to criticise the Universe as a whole. I think the soberest of modern pessimists, Von Hartmann, has fallen into the pitfall here indicated, when he finds the motive for phenomenal existence in the Unblessedness of the Eternal World-

Will. He falls into the same error, in fact, as the Christian Divine when the latter motives the World-Creation by the Desire of the Creator of enhancing His own blessedness. The unspeculative Christian naturally sees no difficulty in this transcendent motive, because he sees no difficulty in a Conscious God : but Hartmann has surmounted the Theistic contradiction, and sees clearly that the World-Essence must be Unconscious ; and yet so strong is his appetite for finality of explanation, that he practically denies his own theoretical first principles by his transcendent practical postulate.

Why the World-Will manifested itself at all we ask in vain. The Agnostic is right in standing dumb-stricken before that Problem, as he is dumb-stricken before the groundless Fact of the World-Will itself. The Isis veil which shrouds that secret can never be uplifted. But that is the sole legitimate reserve of Agnosticism. Every other question is an answerable question ; and any proposition implying Time and Space may, nay, must, be formulated. Although we cannot ask—Why should there be a Universe ? we are not interdicted from asking—What makes one phase

of the world Higher than another, and why should it be a duty to promote the evolution of the Higher, and resist to the utmost the declension of the Higher to the Lower? To the first question I answer that Higher means closest conceivable resemblance to the World-Essence. The World-Will is perfect oneness, perfect Insight and Foresight, perfect self-realization. Man as spiritual microcosm, as a derived entity permeated by the World-Will, feels an instinctive impulse to merge his being in the spiritual macrocosm, to lose himself in ever wider centres of spiritual energy, to be fully self-conscious, and to expand his growth to the limits of the universe.

I can find no significance in Evolution save this. The Christian solution of a self-glorifying and beatific God cannot satisfy me, because there seems to me no warrant for Optimism. The Pessimist solution of a Suffering Deity, to be redeemed by the quiescence of the will enlightened through the futility of effort, does not satisfy me, because I cannot find sufficient evidence that Pain is in excess in the world; and so being neither Optimist nor Pessimist, and yet being under a constraint to see in Progress the deepest fact of the world,

there seems to me no explanation of the constraint short of the hypothesis that it is traceable to the fundamental spring of Life itself, that the instinct of Progress is the witness of the All-Spirit in us, the essence of our very being.

Observe, however, the practical force of this principle. It enables us to discriminate between a true and a false Egoism and Altruism. The Self which gives a Unity to our Being, being not the self which has been gradually formed by the segregation of one part of phenomenal Nature from other parts, but the Essence of the Universe itself, its assertion is perfectly justified ; whereas the affirmation of that other Self is justly either regarded as morally indifferent, or under circumstances stigmatized as selfish. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the very greatest of men have ever been the most self-asserting, or intolerantly dogmatic ; that they speak in tones of authority which scandalizes the humility of the scribes, and yet are utterly unconscious of exaggeration. They are wise with a wisdom not their own, as after-ages prove which build the tombs of prophets contemporary generations have stoned.

Again, there is a true and a false Altruism.

The false Altruism furthers the well-being of the phenomenal individual, and neglects the substantial individual. In the last chapter I alluded to this point, although in other terms. I sought to show that the welfare of one portion of society or of the race had often to be sacrificed to that of another portion, viz., when the progress of Humanity, conceived as an organic whole, was incompatible with regard to the welfare of all the individual units. A true philanthropy means the most far-sighted endeavour for the welfare of Humanity, keeping ever in the foreground the *raison d'être* of Humanity itself, the realization of the idea of a Perfect Spiritual Ego.

A collision, therefore, is inevitable between the optimistic Utilitarians, or as they are sometimes called Social Eudæmonists, and the Evolutionary Culturists. To work for Human Progress is a clear and definite principle of action; to work for the Greatest Happiness is highly ambiguous, and may even be dangerous. Progress necessitates increase both of pleasure and of pain; and to fix our attention on the pleasure side only, to think that this can be added to without enhancing the other side, is delusive, and may lead to retrogression.

Progress implies intenser feeling through heightened faculty, increased power of knowing as well as feeling, a multiplication of wants as well as an ever-growing desire to satisfy them.

Eudæmonistic Utilitarianism, by throwing human beings into an undifferentiated mass, misses the higher law of Progress, and hence its aims are often as fatuous, as they are in the long run defeated. The stolid Conservatism that will not budge from time-honoured ways is therefore often not without its justification, because a shortsighted Utilitarianism may cause the world to do its work over again. The gradation of interests is the most important fact of social life, and a spurious Altruism is always tending to ignore it. Fatal also to human progress would be any measures tending to bind the present at the expense of the Future, any attempt to impede the intercourse of nations, to fix the limits of intellectual inquiry, and to debase public taste; and most fatal of all would be a despotism of Masses which, in pursuit of a vain equality of happiness, should strive to lessen the friction of mind and mind, and handicap the facile energy of superior endowments.

If it could be shown that a lower stage of existence brought a greater sum of happiness, the Social Eudæmonist should especially desire a return to that earlier stage. As Mr. Barlow concisely puts it: "Development of culture is development of discontent. And discontent is unhappiness. The Social Eudæmonists, if consistent, should aim at 'Wiederverthierung' (re-animalization). And, beyond all question, they should cease to propagate the species." ¹

They are not consistent, however, and why? Because, while they make Happiness their life-guide and rule, they refuse to eradicate the impulse to progress, an impulse which implies a feeling no man has ever been found to disown—the rooted aversion to sink lower in the scale of existence; for, even when there is lack of ambition to ascend, there is still found in every human breast the fixed dislike to descend to a lower plane. This deep-seated impulse must have a meaning; and that meaning I have thought to find in an idea which translates Progress into *Regress*—the re-seeking of the Simplicity of Perfection. Of course it is not possible to speak of the supreme motive for action save in mystical language, and even

¹ "Ultimatum of Pessimism," p. 103.

then falteringly; but the highest truths are always mystical—that is, defy the conditions of conventional speech and thought. So, I think, when we get to this last ground of action we find expression begin to fail us, and a gulf is suddenly disclosed between the sphere of the critical understanding and of the intuition of the Reason.

To those at any rate who decline to follow us on the path we have chosen we may fairly say: And what is your supreme motive for living? and how do you reconcile the antinomies of fact and feeling, the hard, bitter experience of a life ever multiplying in desire, but ever tormented with a constant inability to satisfy so insatiable a craving? For, whatever delusions the human race may once have entertained, there can be no doubt that it is awaking out of the illusion which has held so many captive, that an early end of toil and trouble is at hand. There are those of us who believe that the sooner Humanity awakes from this illusion, the better for its solid peace, and the sooner, too, I would add, it rises out of the slough of Sense which feeds its waking dream.

The present age is critical in one respect that it behoves us particularly to note. The

waning power of the World is that Power that once overshadowed it, and almost stifled its natural life—Theology. The Supernatural once wholly dominated Society, and shaped its smallest action. This Power is fading fast, and its real sway is only over the least thoughtful and most abject minds. It is being dethroned by the trained sense of the critical understanding, by the student of Physical Nature, and the Social Eudæmonist. But the newly-risen Power, if it does not recognize its place, may grow as noxious as the old, for the valuable element that the latter possessed in excess the former lacks altogether, and the recognition of that element is essential to a healthy and exalted life. As Theology subordinated all things to a Transcendent Deity, degraded Nature, and crushed Man to earth; so Modern Naturalism ignores the Eternal Spirit in Nature and Man, and perverts the sublimest fact of the world, Personality. This is a formidable danger, formidable because so little suspected. No wonder the Pessimists say if the Eudæmonists get the reins of power into their hands the world will be re-animalized; for the theoretical philosophy, which for the most part underlies their practical creed, is a philosophy

which makes no distinction between Person and Thing, which has no fixed point whereby to steady our vision in the flow of empirical events. No wonder that, in alarm, certain thoughtful moralists proclaim that Man should rise above the vulgar desire of Happiness, and should live for intellectual ends alone, contemning the seductive Feeling, as the Stoics of old. But that is not the remedy for the Evil. The mischief is not that we are strongly moved by pleasure and pain—these are the normal stimulants of the will—but that we will make our finite consciousness the measure of all things, and that what we cannot comprehend with the discursive understanding we treat as irrelevant or non-existent.

Now the greatest fact of all is a fact that we cannot comprehend—Self, yet without Self no thought, no feeling, no world at all. Our Self we can no more comprehend than we can look in our own faces, for seeing Eye *is* the very Self. All vision, all volition, implies two things, a Seer that is antithetic to the object seen, a Will that is motivated by a feeling extrinsic to the willing energy. Now this Seer and Willer is in the proper sense Super-natural, and to ignore that truth is to lose the key to the secrets of

the Universe. It is no small thing, indeed, to keep a firm hold of this thought, for it is the one truth that can bring order into our Science and coherence into our Conduct.

But as firmly as I hold this to be the one saving creed, no less firmly do I hold that this true Ego is not a private Soul, not a finite You and Me parted by intervals of Space or seconds of Time, not the Self born yesterday and dying to-morrow, for that would be to materialize it, to turn it into an object of sense. But it is an All-Self, a Self that only through the deceptive glasses of our discursive apprehension appears Self at all. It is the intrinsically Real, no Creature but Creator, the Life-blood of the World, the sameness of essence that makes the whole world kin, at once Origin and Goal.

VI.

THEORIES OF EXISTENCE, AND DEPENDENT ETHICS.

EVEN at the risk of seeming pedantic, I must, in order to pave the way for final judgments, be extremely precise at the outset of this chapter in the employment and definition of a few leading terms. These are in pairs—Bonism and Malism, Meliorism and Pejorism, Optimism and Pessimism.

By Bonism I mean the doctrine affirming that the universe is so constructed that there is, or may be, at any moment an amount of pleasurable consciousness experienced in excess of displeasurable consciousness; so that if we supposed all separate minds fused into one, and (no option of existence being allowed to such a mind) the question were put to it, "Is sentient existence good?" it would answer "Yes." (The contrary of this position is Malism.)

Meliorism affirms much more than this. It declares not merely that there is an excess of pleasurable over displeasurable consciousness, but that the relative proportions of pleasurable and painful consciousness are continually changing, and that to the advantage of pleasurable consciousness. Hence, if the question were put to the hypothetical unified consciousness, "Is sentient life worth living?" the answer would be a very emphatic "Yes." "For," and the sentiment is echoed by all staunch Meliorists, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." The contrary view, that the world is doomed to increasing suffering, is rightly styled Pejorism.

Lastly, Optimism should mean that not only is Happiness increasing and Misery lessening as the years roll on, but that the Universe is so ordered that *at every point of time* the pleasurable consciousness exceeds the displeasurable to the extent devisable by Perfect Wisdom and Benevolence. It is not that Ormuzd is going to beat Ahriman in the long run, the Devil to be chained in the pit of perpetual darkness after having worried the saints for thousands

of years; but the Happiness actually enjoyed has ever been the maximum that could have been borne from the very commencement of History. And, *per contra*, Pessimism asserts that, under the conditions of creation, a universe with a greater sum of misery could not possibly have been called into being or have endured.

To take the superlative degrees first. The purest, and most philosophical, representatives of these two dogmas have been Leibniz and Schopenhauer. Leibniz' "Theodicée," or "Essais sur la Bonté de Dieu, la Liberté de l'Homme et l'origine du Mal," is a ponderous affair, erudite and subtle; too remote, however, from current modes of thought for an examination of its laboured arguments to be profitable, but valuable as showing to what conclusions Philosophical Theism is necessarily committed. The following is a fair sample of the reasoning: "Some opponent will perhaps say that the World might have been without sin and without suffering, but I deny that then it would have been *better*. The Universe is all of a piece, like an ocean; the least movement spreads to the furthest distance, although it becomes less sensible in proportion to the distance; so God has regulated everything beforehand once for

all, having foreseen the prayers, the good and the bad actions, and all else; and each thing contributed *ideally* before its existence to the resolution formed in regard to the existence of all things. So that nothing can be changed in the Universe. Thus, if the least evil which comes to pass in this world were wanting, it would no longer be this world; which, after every reckoning and every deduction, was found the best by the Creator who chose it. It is true that we can imagine possible worlds, without sin and without unhappiness, and one might fashion them in fancy as easily as Utopias and romances of the Severambians; but these same worlds would nevertheless be very inferior to ours. I cannot show this in detail, for how can I compare infinite possibilities? But you must judge *ab effectu*, since God has chosen this world such as it is. We know, besides, that often an evil causes a good, which would never have happened without this evil. Often even two evils make one great good:

‘Et si fata volunt, bina venena juvant’—

as two liquors sometimes produce a dry body, or two cold and dark bodies a great fire. The general of an army sometimes makes a lucky

blunder, which causes the gain of a great battle ; and is not this Easter hymn chanted in the churches of the Roman cult :

‘ O necessary sin of Adam,
Which has been blotted out by the death of Christ !
O blessed fault which was worthy to have such and so great
an Atoner ! ’ ” ¹

To which the answer of Schopenhauer runs :
“ The manifest sophistical proofs of Leibniz, that this world is the best of possible worlds, may be seriously and in good faith opposed by the argument, that this world is the *worst* of possible worlds. For Possible does not mean what one may anyhow imagine, but what can actually exist and persist. Now this world is so contrived as barely to exist ; were it, however, a little worse, it could not last. Consequently, a worse world, as it could not endure, is not at all possible, and this is therefore the worst among possible worlds. . . . A slight alteration of the atmosphere, too insignificant to be detected by the chemist, causes cholera, yellow fever, black death, &c., which carry off millions of people : a somewhat greater change would extinguish life. A very moderate increase

¹ “ Leibnitii Opera Philosophica,” ed. Erdmann, 1840, pp. 506, 507.

of heat would dry up all springs and rivers. The animals have just sufficient organs and strength for their self-preservation and the rearing of their young. . . . Even of the human race, notwithstanding that it possesses such powerful instruments in understanding and reason, nine-tenths live in continual struggle with want, always on the brink of destruction. . . . The world is consequently as bad as it possibly can be, if it is to be at all. Q. e. d.”¹

In fact, although Leibniz, the pure optimist, and Schopenhauer, the pure pessimist, are so widely sundered in their conclusions, their argumentation is precisely identical, for the best possible world of either is the same actual world. In the view of both there is maximum good on the supposition of a subsisting and persisting world ; a grain more of evil there could not be, nor a grain more good. In fact the *best* possible is the *worst* possible of worlds. You have only to look through the telescope from the end labelled Infinite Wisdom to see with Leibniz the Good magnified to stupendous dimensions ; you have only to reverse the instru-

¹ “Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,” Zweiter Band, 1877, pp. 669-671.

ment, and apply your eye to the glass labelled Infinite Will, to see the good dwindling into insignificance. It is the same world, however, that is seen, gazed at through achromatic glasses of dogmatic crystal—Unconditioned Reason or Unconditioned Will respectively.

Before seeking to find a point of contact between these doctrines of the superlative degree and human conduct, it will be well to see what motives for action are supplied by the other degrees of the scale of comparison.

Meliorism. To have the conviction that it is within the power of human effort to add to the satisfactions, and to diminish the woes, of life is to have a most powerful motive for effective work. And the only desideratum with such a creed is a knowledge of the best means to bring about the result wished for. To the Meliorist there is no blind and deaf Destiny, regardless alike of human prayer and human exertions; but the world is plastic to human science, and we have only to know more and to work harder, and it may become, instead of a valley of tears, a garden of delight.

The *Pejorist* maintains the direct negative of this cheerful creed. He has no faith in the felific power of knowledge, and holds that the

Meliorist is so ardent in his efforts only because he is shortsighted. The latter sees the visible effects of his strenuous exertions, but does not perceive the indirect consequences of the result achieved. The Meliorist, his opponent, affirms, sees the increased stock of wealth, but does not reckon up the lives sacrificed to obtain it. He sees the triumphs of intellect; he does not see at what a cost of abounding physical health and narrowing of the sympathies. He sees the increase of decent living and decrease of positive wrong-doing; he does not see the anxiety behind all the thrift, and the substitution for the pains of violated law of the anguish of enforced self-restraint. But the true Pejorist goes further than this. He holds with the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;" that the more we labour the deeper becomes our misery; that instead of the Golden Age being before us, the Golden Age lies behind us; that the lower the intelligence; not only the less capacity for pain, but the less pain actually felt; that the longer the world lasts, the fewer smiling faces there will be, and that cares multiply faster than satisfactions.

Accordingly, while the logic of Meliorism

conducts to the most vigorous effort, based on the largest attainable understanding of the laws of things, the logic of Pejorism should lead to the quenching of all effort, should check the pursuit of knowledge, should approve Mr. Ruskin in his declamations against machinery and railroads, and should justify without hesitation the concoction of anodynes for the restless human mind,—illusions of either sense or soul, schemes for robbing rich Peters to pay poor Pauls (in the belief that the Pauls will be then contented), and fancy-pictures of post-terrestrial bliss such as delighted the world's spiritual infancy.

But how if neither Meliorism nor Pejorism can make good its theoretical position? if Progress be held to bring neither greater Happiness nor greater Misery, but there be a constancy in the proportion of goods and ills? Then it is still possible to be either a *Bonist* or a *Malist*—i.e., to hold that, though the proportion of happiness to unhappiness cannot be rendered more favourable or more unfavourable, there is a slight bias to the one or the other inherent in the nature of things. Now the difference between the positive Bonism and the superlative Optimism is this : that in the former doctrine the evil of the

world is regarded as real evil, whereas in Optimism it is spirited into non-existence as a species of good. And similarly with Malism and Pessimism. In Malism the good is admitted to be considerable, though less in amount than the evil; but in Pessimism good is wholly illusory, pleasure being mere privation of pain.

Many who may be unable to find sufficient reason for adopting the creed of Meliorism or Pejorism may give a mild assent to, and find life tolerable under, a creed of Bonism or Malism. Provided there be a fair balance of good on the whole in the one case, and a large measure of solid joy in the other, a sufficient stimulus for a good deal of useful activity may be provided. The number of eager Reformers or pronounced Quietists is certainly less than that of the fairly hopeful and tolerably industrious members of society, or of the easy-going and good-hearted grumblers.

But, although Bonism and Malism are doubtless creeds held by a large number of unreflective minds, it is clear that they have little philosophic value, and represent nothing more than an unsifted empirical observation. They have no relation to any first principles,

and the mind that favours the one view in the morning may easily pass over to the other in the evening. In fact, when we come to look the problem of the worth of Life steadily in the face, we find only two positions that have a rational basis or any pretension to be experimentally verifiable — the one being Meliorism (or its contrary Pejorism), the other what, for lack of a name, I will call INDIFFERENTISM. By Indifferentism I mean the position that pleasurable and painful consciousness are in equipoise ; that, whether we regard the individual or collective sentience, the happiness is really matched by the unhappiness ; or, as I should prefer to state it, the ordinary point of Feeling is zero, but that whenever this zero point is exceeded there is an after fall below it, wherever there is a *minus* there is a subsequent *plus* of emotional excitement.

The Meliorist and the Pejorist are (as I stated in a former chapter) the proper designations for those whom we are in the habit of calling Optimist and Pessimist. Optimism and Pessimism strictly are *metaphysical* creeds. They rest on metaphysical assumptions, and one may say the ethics flowing from them are metaphysical ethics. Meliorism and Pejorism pre-

suppose a developing universe, and the ethics based on these doctrines are physical or natural ethics. Indifferentism is either physical or metaphysical in its implications and consequences.

It is now my task to come to close quarters with these several doctrines, and to attempt to arrive at some final judgment on the question at issue.

Is Life worth living? That is the theoretical question we proposed to answer. And whether it be worth living or not worth living, what should be the governing principle of our conduct?

Is Life worth living? This is susceptible of two interpretations. (1) Is a preponderance of pleasure over pain attainable in life? (2) Admitting there is a certain amount of inevitable pain, although less than the procurable pleasure, would sentience be rationally preferable to insentience?

A preponderance of Pleasure over Pain is obtainable, answers the Meliorist, because Pleasure is the correlative of life-preserving and life-augmenting actions, therefore the more life the more pleasure. If only sensuous

or corporeal Pleasure be considered this is true, at least true until Humanity has reached its grand climacteric, and the waste of energy be no longer repaired. But this correlation of sensuous well-being and bodily activity does not touch the representative life of thought and higher emotion. No proof can be drawn from the fact that there is an annual excess of births over deaths, or that the devastations of fatal disease are less than in former times, that there is a real addition to the sum of satisfaction in the human world. Parental joys are doubtless considerable, but is there not a record of some consequence on the negative side? Extra struggle for existence, extra care and anxiety? And does the absence of disease necessarily imply increase of happiness? That depends upon how the life is filled. But I have in a former chapter already gone over this ground and found how slippery it is, how impossible it is to produce a balance-sheet that is recognized as truly objective, how volatile the elements of feeling are, defying precise quantitative estimation. As Voltaire answered the metaphysical dogmatism of Leibniz by his telling satire "*Candide*," so the thesis of empirical Meliorism will always evoke its anti-

thesis in an equal array of attendant drawbacks to all the "blessings" of Progress.

There are, I believe, two supports of Meliorism which at present bias our judgment, but which may possibly give way in time—Hope, and fear of the practical consequences of the contrary creed. Hope is strong in proportion to our ignorance. Its function in human life is to draw us into useful action where we have no rational grounds for action. But as we get to know the real forces at work it loses its importance, and at last is extinguished. This I believe to be one support of Meliorism. But there is another perhaps of scarcely less consequence; a secret fear lest, if men came to believe that their actions would not result in a relative increase of happiness, they might cease to labour at all; and there is a deep-seated instinct which seems to defy all criticism, however telling, that it is Man's *duty* to labour, that to fold the hands and call to rest is the supreme turpitude.

Now so far as a premature Pejorism would lead to this withdrawal from the field of active service this dread is in place, and if Meliorism were the only bulwark against such a result it would be needful to maintain it, even if it were

indemonstrable. But experience has shown, I think, that no creed has ever had much practical power that has ceased to be really believed, although it may receive lip-homage by reason of the esteem in which its expounders are held, or the social advantages accorded to its repeaters. If the majority of the world were to cease to be Meliorists to-morrow, I doubt if the most awe-inspiring description of the fatal consequences of Pejorism would of itself suffice to avert a Pejorist tendency. It so happens, however, that there is usually a remarkable consilience between the need for, and duration of, a creed. Meliorism is now perhaps a practical necessity for the majority of men; but that does not prove it to be a doctrine true in itself, or that it will not give place to its rival at some remote future date.

But if there be in Man the progressive instinct alluded to, Pejorism will still have to come to terms with this instinct, and the Denial of Life feared by the Meliorist will not become a practical creed. "The progressive instinct," some one will reply, "yes, but that is the true prompter of Meliorism. The progressive instinct is nothing but this latent feeling that Happiness may supplant unhappiness in the

world." I join issue there. I do not believe that the progressive urging is an expectation of Happiness at all. The expectation of Happiness is doubtless a powerful stimulant of action; but the progressive instinct is antecedent to expectation—it is a force behind conscious experience, and the expectation of Pleasure or Happiness could only arise after the genesis of consciousness, after pleasure had actually been tasted.

But now supposing we allow the Bonist or Meliorist to have proved his case, and admit that there is, or may be, a preponderance of felt pleasure over felt pain in the world: is the positive value of life established in the sense that, given the option to either live or not live, Existence would be preferable to Non-Existence? That is the question of Life's Worth that the Pessimist claims to have a voice upon.

I cannot do better than quote at this point the words of Schopenhauer. He says, "At bottom it is quite superfluous to dispute whether there is more good or evil in the world: for the *mere existence of Evil* already decides the case; since it is never expunged by

the simultaneous or subsequent good, consequently also cannot be compensated :

‘ Mille piacer’ non vagliono un tormento ’¹ (*Petr.*).

For that thousands have lived in felicity and bliss would never annul the anguish and death-torment of a single creature : and just as little does my present well-being wipe out my former pangs. If, therefore, there were a hundred times less evil in the world than there actually is ; yet the mere existence of the same would be sufficient to establish a truth, which may be expressed in various ways, although always only somewhat indirectly, viz., that we have not to rejoice, rather to mourn, over the existence of the world ; that its non-existence would be preferable to its existence ; that it is somewhat that properly speaking ought not to be ; &c.”² This is the strong point of Pessimism, and whoever would vanquish this melancholy creed must take the sting out of the above objection.

It is clear that in advancing this difficulty the idea of a Hedonical Calculus is put on

¹ A thousand pleasures are not worth *one* torment.

² “ Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung ” Zweiter Band, 1877 p. 661.

one side, implicitly regarded as futile. It is declared, in other words, that Pleasure and Pain are really incommensurable. We find the same assumption in the many attempts that have been made to surround the fact of Suffering with a peculiar halo or mystery. The notion that a thousand pleasures cannot compensate a single pain is closely involved with a view of Life's wretchedness that has nothing in common with empirical Pejorism. We are at once in another region of thought, a region, however, it must be added, in which millions of men have lived and died. We are in the sphere of thought of those singular Historic Religions, Brahmanism and Buddhism, and in part of Christianity. For in all these Religions, but pre-eminently in the first two, Suffering occupies a unique place in the spiritual system, being indeed the pivot on which their Transcendental Ethics turns.

The question, Is Life worth living? does not admit of an unambiguous answer unless we clearly understand the plane of thought on which an answer is to be sought. Either, that is, we occupy the standpoint of Empiricism, and seek a solution within the region of Phenomena, or we carry the question into a pro-

founder sphere, and make it part of the problem of cosmical Evolution itself.

The first is the standpoint of Common Sense, Agnosticism, Naturalism, Positivism. From this theoretical or speculative position it is assumed that human faculty is impotent to transcend the sphere of sensuous realities. The World is the world of physical or psychical *events*. That the events issue from, or end in, Realities that are not Events is either denied, or considered a question without significance. This position affords a theoretical basis for a Practical Rule, possessing coherence of a certain sort. The systematized thought or philosophy may be of various kinds, but I will select that one that perhaps possesses most promise of vitality, the doctrine that passes by the name of Positivism.

Now Positivism is an empirical Philosophy that professes to supply a sufficing working creed. On the theoretical side it is an exposition of the general facts presented in time and space that can in any way influence Man's terrestrial destiny; on the practical side it is a system of rules deduced from the relation of the individual to the connected whole, Humanity. As in older Ethics human duty was determined

by the relation of the individual to a superhuman Personality, so in Positive Ethics Duty is the constraint of volition through the dependence of each individual on the "Great Being" which has determined his spiritual anatomy, and to which he must contribute his quota of volition to mould the Humanity of the Future. Ethics implies a bond, and the bond in this system is the fact of our indebtedness to past human effort for our material and spiritual capital, and the equally undeniable fact that we now living are the stewards of that inherited wealth for the sake of the Future.

But now, what are Pleasure and Pain in this system? Transient phenomena of transient sentient beings. They have no significance other than what is legible by every passing eye. They are indications whether Man is complying with the conditions of physical or psychical sanity, but they whisper of no Universal problem.

Now the great Historic Religions did not leave the matter there. Positivism may be (what it claims to be) the heir of the Catholic Christian Church; it is not the heir of speculative Christianity, and still less of the great Oriental religions. It has no conception of a

Suffering God (the essential doctrine of Christian Theosophy); no conception of a Sinning Deity, who lapsed from the purity and serenity of his ante-mundane estate by creating a world (as Brahmanism); no vision of a Nirvana as the goal of human endeavour, the final rest of all suffering souls (as in Buddhism).

Let us see how Pain and Pleasure appear in the light of these venerable creeds. It is common to the two great Oriental Religions that they look upon Existence as essentially Evil. They are in accord that it would be better not to be—that is to say, they are both impressed by the extent and inevitableness of pain and suffering. No religion of Semitic or Hellenic origin shares this conviction. The God of the Hebrews (in their sacred book) pronounces the world he has just created to be “very good;” for the Hellene sees in the spectral Hereafter but a pale reflection of the fulness of this desirable life of earth. In Brahmanism Existence is essentially evil because it is finite, for the finite is tainted with the curse of self-distinction. The Peace of the Divine Unity has been broken up by Creation. Real Existence is only possible through differentiation of Subject and Object,

and the curse of Existence lights most surely on him who fails to recognize this derivative individuality, and regards himself as Substantial Ego. Hence the development of Existence, or the fuller realization of subjective pleasure and further estrangement from Perfection; and he, who would reascend the empyrean heights whence he fell, will mortify this proud pseudo-self, and eradicate by fasting and self-denial the fatal lust of life. Suffering, therefore, in the Brahmanic system is a means of grace, something essentially sacred, for the more the faithful suffers the more completely he is purging himself of the sin which gave him birth.

This obligatory asceticism is foreign to Buddhism. Buddhism is at once less profound and more humane than its predecessor. It knows nothing of the creating Brahma and the deceiving veil of Maya; but it is so far transcendental that it regards the essence of the individual to be distinct from the form of individuality, and holds physical death to be illusory, and only moral death to be real. The Cardinal Virtues of Buddhism are three—Continence, Patience, and Compassion, of which one may say the greatest of these is Compassion. [I may remark that Schopenhauer

borrowed his Metaphysic from Brahmanism and his Ethics from Buddhism.]

Lastly, the true genius of Christianity is to be found in the doctrine of a Deity redeeming a world through his voluntary suffering. Of course, to the cool eye of Reason, there is nothing heroic in this, as heated enthusiasts have often feigned; for, as the Almighty has created this world with all its seed of misery, it was only an act of simple justice that God himself should atone for his work. But it was something to bind the Lord of the Universe Himself by the law of Justice; and it is also easy to see how, with such a creed, Suffering becomes invested with a mysterious halo, which it has probably even now lost in few minds trained under Christian influence.

The Pessimism of Modern Germany is also metaphysical. It sees in Suffering a quasi-supernatural fact, and it refuses the name of Philosophy to any system of thought that stops short at Empiricism. It refuses to accept the dogma of Positivism that we can only know and are only concerned with Phenomena, and it thinks it furnishes the basis of a more coherent practical creed than a religion of simple Humanity. With Schopenhauer,

the world-essence is a veritable Unity—Blind Will—or what answers to that which we call Will in the non-phenomenal sphere, for even Will is tinged with human subjectivity. But that Essence which ever presses to manifestation in Plant, Animal, Man, is an Urging to life which is utterly lawless, utterly reckless, its one aim being self-manifestation ; and, as complete self-manifestation is impossible for an Infinite, there is ever the sense of defeat, ever the pain of perpetual craving. But as the Essential Will is one in essence, Individuality is (as with Brahmanism), accursed ; and to increase individuality and all thereto appertaining is to sin the original sin.

What Ethics can flow from this ? To retrace lost steps, to obliterate individuality, to identify ourselves with others [Buddhism] ; and, though it is a strange contradiction of a Compassionate Ethic, to retire from the world and mortify our personal will, in order to kill the source of Egoism in us.

Hartmann leans more on the Christian scheme. The God who made the world, of which the world is the manifestation, is self-redeeming, not through retirement from social life or mortification of desires, but through

procuring universal insight into the vanity of endeavour, through the highest development of intelligence. The last word of this creed is—Aid at all cost the progress of Intelligence, for until the World-Will is enlightened there is no termination to the Tragedy of Existence.

We have now seen shortly what creeds are maintainable concerning Life's worth, and what practical rules have been deduced therefrom. Is the practical logic of these several systems flawless? and how far are their theoretical foundations acceptable?

Optimism (and I use this term now as representing all degrees of comparison), whether empirical or transcendental, has one Golden Rule of Right—Increase Happiness to the utmost. The difficulty of this Rule is in the application, which may become very formidable; for the furthering of immediate happiness may often be directly contrary to the spirit of the precept. Optimism has to be clear as to the *subjects* of Happiness. Admitting, as it cannot but admit, that a developing world must entail sacrifice in some parts, it must make up its mind what expenditure is legitimate to obtain maximum good. This will necessitate some

clear theory of the relation of the sentient units to the whole, and of the present units to the yet unborn members of society. In the full recognition of this lies the great merit of the Positive System, which needs, however, much buttressing before it can be pronounced impregnable as an empirical system of Knowledge and Duty.

I cannot learn from Positivism when personal sacrifice is necessary, and find no criterion by which to determine to what lengths it shall go. Of course Positivism must be optimist, or its vital nerve is cut. Its supreme motive for dutiful living is gratitude to the Past ; it appeals, as it were, to our sense of honour. "Lo ! you enjoy the good things for which you have not laboured. Do then as you are done by, and pay the debt to your successors." We have here another illustration of the vast importance of the theme we have been discussing. The question of Optimism and Pessimism lies at the root of all rational conduct, and should occupy the first chapter in every Practical Philosophy. Are the Positive thinkers aware of this necessity ? The all-important chapter is wanting in the "*Politique Positive*" of the master. Has it yet been supplied ?

Pessimism does not provide so simple a rule as Optimism ; for the two species, the empirical and the transcendental, have their practical differences. In espousing an empirical dogmatism, which equates the All and the sphere of Physical Causation, coupled with a firm conviction that the value of Life was below zero, would there be any rational course to adopt but individual suicide? Unless, indeed, sympathetic feeling had become so engrained that we could not taste a good save in company—in which case we should remain in life until we had convinced our friends and neighbours that self-murder was also their reasonable service. The immediate application of the practical inference is only reasonable for the empirical Pessimist, and even for him only so far as his altruistic nature is of low development, for (as hinted) on one deeply affected by the sufferings of the world a higher law would surely dawn—to mitigate the sufferings of others until such time as the preaching of the most rational rule of Life's Denial by self-inflicted death had been duly taken to heart.

As soon, however, as the Pessimist transcends a Phenomenal creed, and believes with all the great historic Religions of the

world that Suicide is no panacea (since the death of the body is not the death of the soul), Suicide at any time ceases to be reasonable, and the practical rule will run : Aim to bring to pause the World-Will, either by refraining from further desire, that is by renunciation of all pleasures, or (if individual redemption be despaired of and only collective redemption credited) by preparing the perception of the truer pessimistic view through the various direct or indirect methods summed up in the spiritual progress of Civilization.

Now if diffusion of Happiness and Progressive Civilization be coincident, Optimism and Pessimism, although theoretical extremes, practically meet. If, however, Civilization and Happiness be non-coincident, so far as their positive ethics are concerned they are thoroughly opposed. For the Pessimist believes that the increase of Happiness means retrogression to lower planes of intelligence, whereas the Optimist would consider that to maximize Happiness must be to completely unfold human powers. But although on the positive side they are thus opposed, on the negative side they meet ; for the diminution of Unhappiness is the Aim of the Optimist, and the mitigation of suffering in-

curred in the great civilizade is the dictate of sympathy, which is one of the finest fruits of Progress.

The difficulty which has hitherto baffled, and perhaps will always baffle, human understanding, is the apparent counter-drift of the universe. On the one hand the Universe is ever tending to the elaboration of more perfect individuals; on the other hand this individuation is ever being undone. The Optimist ignores the levelling, or generifying, tendency; the Pessimist sees only the operation of general law. Hence, too, the pendulum swing of Philosophy from Pluralism (or the assertion of innumerable entities) to Monism, or the denial of all but one. Pluralism is the appropriate ontology of Optimism, Monism of Pessimism.

I have thus sought to complete the task I set myself, though in a very rough and sketchy manner. My own position, it will have been seen, is a neutral one. I do not recognize a positive worth of life. On the other hand, I cannot be claimed by the Pessimists, unless the view be admitted that pains and pleasures are incommensurable. But, as Life to me has no

worth, what motive, it may be asked, have I to propose to myself, and for those who adopt the same standpoint? Why should we who are Hedonistic Indifferentists try to go on living?

We seek to live because we obey an instinct from which we cannot free ourselves, and which we trust is rational, although we cannot prove it to be so—an instinct that impels us to aid in the development of Human Society, in all its varied phases, and with strict regard to its graded interests. I believe that this instinct is the stirring in us of the moving spring of the Universe; and as my mind is so constituted as to behold a Universe or Cosmos and not a Chaos, an object of Order, Harmony, Reason, so I confide that this instinct too is latent Reason, and that the Impulse admits of justification. But so far as I have yet been instructed I cannot find this justification. Not in Optimism, for the increase of Happiness relatively to Unhappiness seems to me an illusion; not in Pessimism, for its transcendental motives seem to me obtained only at the cost of contradiction of First Principles. The instinct of Progress is of the World's essence; it is to attempt the impossible to try and generate it out of a primal act of world-creation. We are of the

World, and cannot bridge the interval between the pre-existent Repose of the All-One and the World's Origin.

Much that I have said will sound to many strange and fantastic, for Metaphysics and Ontology are not in fashion in this country. Nor am I so unfamiliar with the prevailing Scientific Dogmatism as not to be prepared for the pitying smile of the empirical thinker at loose suggestions of a Life within Life, of Influences that lie deeper than conscious Thought or Feeling. But we are living in times of great surprises, and perhaps one surprise more may be in store for the world—to see again some old faces, that it had thought the faces of mummies, peering upon it with kindling and undimmed eye ; to hear again some spherulic music that great souls are said once to have heard, but which we have come to regard as Orphic fables ; to find that there is no contradiction between a transitory and an abiding universe, that labour for Time is also labour for Eternity, that the deepest harmony is composed of discords, and that at a point not yet discerned, even Optimism and Pessimism are lost in a Higher Unity.

THE VALUE OF SPECULATIVE HYPOTHESES.

MUCH has been written of late years on the function of Hypotheses ; and the apologetic, or contemptuous, tone in which their employment was spoken of by the *savans* of a couple of centuries ago is almost a theme of wonder to us of the present day. Even so great a stickler for matter-of-fact knowledge as Auguste Comte declared Hypothesis to be " a powerful and indispensable auxiliary in our study of nature ; " and the last great writer on Logical Method sees in its liberal application the first condition of scientific progress.

While, however, there is this agreement as to the necessity of having recourse to hypotheses, if we would have any profound insight into natural phenomena, there are two opposite tendencies betrayed by those who have treated expressly of the conditions of their formation. Some, as Whewell and Jevons, would place

hardly any restraint on the guessing propensity; while others, as Comte and to a certain extent Mill, seem inclined to restrict the use of Hypothesis within narrow limits. Thus the just named French philosopher, in closing his examination of the "*Théorie fondamentale des hypothèses*,"¹ emphasizes the statement that "every scientific hypothesis, in order to be really judgeable, must exclusively refer to *the laws of phenomena*, and never to *their modes of production*," a limitation which leads him to class the hypothetical caloric, luminous ether, and electric fluids on a level with the elementary spirits of Paracelsus; and Mill holds it to be a *sine qua non* of a legitimate hypothesis that we should be able to obtain something equivalent to tangible evidence, that the assumed cause is or was in existence at the place and time assigned—a limitation which, as G. H. Lewes remarks, would make short work of both the Nebular and Evolution hypotheses.

On the other hand, Jevons is far indeed from stigmatizing the Cartesian vortices as inherently "false," because we could never get a sight of the celestial whirlpools, but simply because

¹ "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*," vol. ii. p. 312, second edition, 1864.

the hypothesis is incompatible with other observed phenomena ; and both Whewell and Jevons are at one in considering a hypothesis to be proved if it merely accounts for the facts.

The authors I have named, however, are not always consistent with themselves. Thus, while Mill, when exemplifying his doctrine, exhibits an excessive caution, he yet commits himself to a proposition which might have made the great Positivist's hair stand on end. "An hypothesis being a mere supposition, there are no other limits to hypotheses than those of the human imagination ; we may, if we please, imagine, by way of accounting for an effect, some cause of a kind utterly unknown, and acting according to a law altogether fictitious,"¹ a permission which is certainly generous to a fault, for the imagining a cause "of a *kind* utterly unknown" would assuredly severely tax the resources of the representative faculty.

Lewes, who takes Mill to task for his rigour, himself, however, so far imposes restrictions that he affirms "all hypotheses are illusory which cannot justify themselves by enlarging knowledge,"² instancing as illusory hypotheses

¹ "A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive," fifth edition, 1862, vol. ii. p. 9.

² "Problems of Life and Mind," vol. i. 1874, p. 339.

Electricity, Ozone, Polarity, Nerve - atmospheres, Repulsive atmospheres, Psychic force ; and lays it down that "the supposed Agent or Agency must be a *true cause*," *i.e.*, "one known to be in operation somewhere." ¹

That even the acutest minds are in danger of getting into a fog on this subject is proved by the curious laxity of language in Jevons' "Principles of Science." On page 138, vol. ii. (edit. i.), he writes, "There will be no difficulty in pointing out to what conditions, or rather to what condition, an hypothesis must conform in order to be accepted as valid and probable. That condition, as I conceive, is the single one of enabling us to infer the existence of phenomena which occur in our experience." But on page 431 we read, "We may safely accept as a satisfactory scientific hypothesis the doctrine so grandly put forth by Laplace, who asserted that a perfect knowledge of the universe, as it existed at any given moment, would give a perfect knowledge of what was to happen thenceforth and for ever after."

It is rather odd to find a doctrine intrinsically unverifiable styled a scientific hypothesis, still more a *satisfactory* hypothesis, and by a writer

¹ "Problems of Life and Mind," vol. i. p. 338.

who is never weary of iterating that, know how-
ever much of the Universe we may, "we cannot
disprove the possibility of Divine Interference
in the course of Nature." If Jevons meant
that, if we were all-perfect Deity, we should
have the attributes of Deity, omniscience
among the rest, he might be right, but would
be enouncing a truism. But how the doctrine
in question can be in any sense a "hypothesis"
(erasing "scientific") if "the same Power,
which created material Nature, might, so far as
I can see, create additions to it, or annihilate
portions which do exist,"¹ passes my humble
comprehension.

Again, let the reader consider the following
concluding words of the same important
treatise: "Now, among the most unquestion-
able rules of Scientific Method is that first
law that whatever phenomena is, is. We
must ignore no existence whatever; we may
variously interpret or explain its meaning and
origin, but if a phenomenon does exist it
demands some kind of explanation. If, then,
there is to be a competition for scientific re-
cognition, the world without us must yield to
the undoubted existence of the spirit within.

¹ "The Principles of Science," 1874, vol. ii. p. 466.

Our own hopes and wishes and determinations are the most undoubted phenomena within the sphere of consciousness. If men do act, feel, and live as if they were not merely the brief products of a casual conjunction of atoms, but the instruments of a far-reaching purpose, are we to record all other phenomena and pass over these? We investigate the instincts of the ant and the bee and the beaver, and discover that they are led by an inscrutable agency to work towards a distant purpose. Let us be faithful to our scientific method, and investigate also those instincts of the human mind, by which man is led to work as if the approval of a Higher Being were the aim of life."

Now, "our scientific method" consists in this: "When facts are already in our possession, we frame an hypothesis to explain their mutual relations, and by the success or non-success of this explanation is the value of the hypothesis to be judged."¹ But what would be the criterion of success or non-success in explaining "those instincts of the human mind, by which man is led to work as if the approval of a Higher Being were the aim of life?" In the case of ordinary scien-

¹ "Principles of Science," 1874, vol. ii. p. 131.

tific hypotheses the power of deducing consequences in accordance with facts is the commonly accepted criterion. Let us try this on these "instincts of the human mind."

Let one hypothesis be that there *is* a higher approving Being, who has implanted the idea that man has to work to obtain his approval. Let another be that man has provided for himself as a motive for action the belief that he can gain the approval of a Higher Being. Let a third be that man labours as if to an onlooker he were working to obtain the approval of a Higher Being, but without such being the man's real aim at all. Which of these hypotheses is true?

An application of the Method of Agreement seems to indicate plurality of causes—for there is often the work without the instinct. Method of Concomitant Variations—so much the more faith so much the better work—does not seem more promising, for some of the best work in the world has been done by atheists, and often a man's period of hard labour first begins when he puts aside his Theology. Supposing, finally, all the three rival hypotheses lead to the same results, how should we determine which is the right one? Take the work of a Pessimist who,

far from labouring for the sake of the approval of a higher Being, makes it the first principle of all scientific philosophy that such Being has earned only scorn by ushering so horrible a world into existence. The test of accordance with facts then breaks down. None the less, however, does the instinct, although partial, require explanation, when indeed the conditions of scientific hypothesis will enter into their full rights.

The point for which the preceding remarks are intended to serve as introduction is this. There are two distinct classes of hypotheses. There is a hypothesis which does admit of verification and proof, which we may eventually determine to be either true or not true, and this is the *scientific hypothesis proper*. And there is another kind of supposition, which by its very nature is destined to remain for ever hypothesis, and which I propose to call a *speculative hypothesis*. Of this the only criterion is negative, not positive. It must not be contravened by fact, but so long as it can be put into intelligible terms, and is not self-contradictory, it may find lawful lodgment in the mind, though being without a material criterion it is subjective and individual.

If there were any speculative hypothesis which all men were found spontaneously to adopt, or which they could be forced to adopt on pain of self-stultification, this subjectivity could be raised to objectivity, and there would be at least one inexpugnable article of a transcendental creed.

Such an instance accordingly Kant believed himself to have found in *Free Will*. He confessed that all appearances contradicted the doctrine. Free Will was not only indiscernible, it was impossible, in the world of Fact; but none the less all men who attain to moral consciousness, who are encumbered by a feeling of pure obligation, which often runs utterly athwart the cravings of the sensitive nature, must (so he held) perforce possess this unique power, and, moreover, cannot help believing that they possess it. Reason is self-legislating. Free Will is "a hypothesis," but *if we could explain it*, it would cease to be free will; it is credible because incomprehensible. It is a speculative, not a scientific, hypothesis. Admitting it, our knowledge will never be "enlarged" by it, as Lewes demands. The gain to be derived from its admission is the repose that comes from resting in thought upon something which is *self-affirming*.

I have taken Free Will to be a mere theoretical principle, devoid of practical value, a view not usually allowed by moralists, although Mr. Sidgwick may be cited as a distinguished exception.

Another region of Hypothesis with respect to which a little more lucidity would be desirable is that of Personality. Human beings are wont to describe themselves as *Persons*, in contradistinction to all other objects of the known Universe. Unfortunately, the term is ambiguous. Its import is sometimes material, sometimes formal. It may mean either an "entity" or an "essence," a substratum or an ideal unity. A common source of obscurity is the use of the word *Ego*. According to some it is the *Ego* that performs all the marvels of the intellectual and moral life. A popular illustration is afforded by the following passage from an article in the *Contemporary Review* by Cardinal Manning, quoted and endorsed by Dr. Carpenter in his "Mental Physiology."¹ "What is true in this case [existence of an External World] of a judgment formed upon the report of Sense, by the interpretation of the Intellect, is still more evidently true of the

¹ Fourth edition, 1876, p. 6.

decisions of our Consciousness on such interior facts as Thought or Will, and of the existence of an Internal World which is our living Personality, the Agent who thinks and wills." The same writer goes on to speak of the "consciousness of the existence of our living self or personality, whereby we think, will, or act."¹ It is clear what is in the mind of the Cardinal—an entity wielding certain powers—whether separable or inseparable from such activity is left in doubt. I will not be so captious as to inquire what rational sense can be put into the phrase "*our* living self or personality," holding thoughts and not words to be the only proper matter of criticism, though vantage-ground is sometimes sought to be gained by citing the employment of personal pronouns by empirical psychologists or common men. Those who repudiate the substantial interpretation of personality may make exactly the same phenomenal distinctions as the stoutest believer in an "agent who thinks and wills," and imply the same unity of consciousness.

Now unless Kant has lived in vain, this consciousness of a Real Ego is a simple fiction. "It would indeed be surprising," says Kant,

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Feb. 1871, p. 469.

“if the conception of substance, which in other cases requires so much labour to distinguish from the other elements presented by intuition . . . should be presented immediately to me, as if by revelation, in the poorest mental representation of all.”¹

To attempt to make consciousness afford information about that which itself is out of consciousness, is to fall into one of those metaphysical traps which it might have been expected a prelate of the Church of Rome at this time of day at least would have kept clear of.

In short, the upholders of a substantial Self must be content to lower their favourite doctrine to the rank of a Hypothesis. And they may then elect between the Speculative and the Scientific species. If the choice fall on the scientific then proof may rightly be demanded, and the canons of inductive logic must be invoked. Such a substantial Ego speedily becomes an *embodied soul*, and evidence will have to be furnished that the embodier and embodiment are twain. The popular view of a future life is related to this hypothesis. At death the soul is supposed to be

¹ “Critique of Pure Reason,” translated by J. M. D. Meiklejohn, p. 242.

divested of its former clothing and to be encased anew, the new body as body being open to the view of a sense-intuition adequate for its perception. If, however, this interpretation be repudiated, and the notion of a soul be rejected as mythical, then the hypothesis of an existing substantial Ego falls into the speculative class, and proof thereof becomes impossible. The conception may bring coherence to the philosophy of A, and throw into confusion the ontology of B.

In the instance just discussed, be it observed that it is to the *scientific* hypothesis that our practical interest is attached. A whole host of feelings and desires cling round the supposition of a continuous stream of conscious life under whatever physical conditions; and, if the inquisitive impulse is really strong, no pains will be spared, all ridicule braved, to test its worth. But the same cannot be said of the *speculative* form of assumption, which is the ghost of a ghost-belief, and those to whom the belief is of primary concern (albeit they perhaps would not own so much with their lips) would be only too glad to convert the speculative into the scientific hypothesis.

But I now come to a case where a specu-

lative hypothesis raises more plausible pretensions to be of practical moment, seems really capable of powerfully affecting conduct. It is the view of many that there is no sufficient motive for well-doing without the belief that "there actually is a Supreme Being who will adequately reward me for obeying the rules of duty, or punish me for violating them." This belief, according to Professor Sidgwick, is essential to ethical science. "It is," one may say, "a matter of life and death to the Practical Reason that this premiss should be somehow obtained."¹

The Science of First Principles is troubled by the spectacle of the guilty party frequently carrying off his neighbour's share with impunity, of the virtuous man sometimes going without his cake and sugarplums. That virtue should be *its own* reward would apparently contradict the practical Reason, and triumphant selfishness would throw our cosmic philosophy into confusion. Professor Sidgwick is, in fact, Paley *redivivus*. But there is this difference between the new and the old Paley, that the latter lived in the not very rarefied philosophical atmosphere of the eighteenth century, at a time

¹ "The Methods of Ethics," second edition, 1877, pp. 467-8.

when the abstract generalizations of Nature which give the cue to philosophical conceptions had not been carried beyond the inorganic sphere; while the new Paley might, had he chosen, have breathed the airs of "the Higher Pantheism," and had his world of thought enlarged by the grand perspective opened by the biological speculations of Charles Darwin. Although, therefore, I think that better things might have been expected of Mr. Sidgwick, let me consider the case as presented by him with reference to our present subject.

What is the kind of hypothesis we are requested to entertain? Certainly not scientific, for it is the ground of the argument that the right things do not always go to the right parties—we can find no agreement with fact, which is the one sole and sufficient test of the genuine scientific hypothesis. The hypothesis must be a speculative one, and the question is, What is its worth?

Well, that will depend upon the mind who entertains it. Its worth will probably be in inverse ratio to the stage of development of such mind. To believe in a future heaven or hell there must first of all be the belief in a future life, and secondly in the greater proba-

bility of good and ill being there obtained or eluded than happens in this life. But as the latter assumption, at least, is hardly likely to have moral effect on a mind that does not credit an anthropomorphic deity—for what *a priori* reason can there be, independently of a conscious Divine Will, of the evolutionary process working more smoothly in another state of existence than in the present?—a Supreme Being fashioned after our likeness must be assumed. But the larger the number of hypotheses, the weaker the chain; and even if the stress be lightened by throwing overboard the vulgar Theism, the chances of a scientific Ethic are sufficiently remote. For our author's language is explicit enough. "The Religious Sanction, if we can show that it is actually attached to the Utilitarian code, is of course adequate: but its existence cannot be demonstrated by ethical arguments alone. We can only show that, without this or some similar assumption, Ethical Science cannot be constructed." ¹

But now what is Ethical Science? "Both Ethics and Politics," we read, "are distinguished [and I accept the distinction] from

¹ "The Methods of Ethics," third edition, 1884, p. xxx.

positive science, by having as their special and primary object to determine what ought to be, and not to ascertain what merely is." ¹ But is this "ought" a ready-made thing, and not rather a something in the making? Here is the vice of this school of abstract moralists. They assume as an ethical norm the ideal which the "practical reason" shapes, and transfer the consequences of conformity or disconformity to such an ideal to actions performed during the process of working towards that ideal. No doubt in the ideal state rewards and punishments will be strictly adjusted to action—that is just what the ideal "ought" means,—but why should we suppose that in any state of incompleteness, rewards and punishments could be unerring in their operation? Would it not be strange if it were so? It is the more surprising that Professor Sidgwick has overlooked this, as he finds fault with Mr. Spencer for treating Ethics too exclusively with reference to a Utopian future.

The question is not entirely disposed of, however, and I admit that there is a point of view where speculative hypothesis seems in its full right. Although there are adequate powers

¹ "Methods of Ethics," book i. c. i. § 1.

within the control of this world for realizing all the demands of the moral imperative, yet some minds of an imaginative cast may desiderate a wider perspective than is presented by the changes which could ever be witnessed by the denizens of this earth. Terrestrial evolution being only a part of the cosmic evolution, the poet-philosopher may well strain his inward eye to catch a glimpse of an Idea which shall legitimate the process of Evolution itself. He may put the matter thus: "While I intensely desire my own greatest happiness, and find it reasonable that all other men desire the like, have also a certain share of sympathy which has linked my own welfare to that of others—thus possess adequate motives for private and public work—there are signs in the experience of the world taken as a whole which suggest that happiness, although an end to the individual, is not an end to Humanity taken as an organic whole. Indeed, I cannot rationalize my conduct as a citizen of the world on any other supposition. For when I come to look at the evolutionary process, I do not find the increasing sum of Happiness outweighing the increasing sum of misery. I see the process, the progress, but I do not see an emotional gain."

I can imagine that a speculative hypothesis, which should satisfy the craving for an ultimate end of positive worth, might be a comfort to an individual in such straits, and might free him from the disquiet which the spectacle of a sort of Tantalus endeavour had occasioned.

This leads me to put my final question : What, in view of our growing intelligence, is likely to be the future value of speculative, or unverifiable, hypotheses ? Is their value likely to rise or fall ? Our economist friends will perhaps direct me for an answer to the principle of Supply and Demand, and will ask me to consider whether the craving is destined to increase, or the stock of desirable pabulum likely to fall short. I take the hint, and pursue the analogy.

Well, it appears to me the value determined by the play of these competitors will progressively fall, fall perhaps to zero. I do not count as speculative hypotheses Theories of Knowledge which assume to unfold the statics of Metaphysics. The value of this branch of philosophy I believe will rise. But the Dynamics of Metaphysics—and a speculative hypothesis is usually dynamical—this it is which will be at a discount. To seek to know

the Purpose of the Universe, to try to discover a Creator, to speculate upon the imperishability of the soul, and so on—all this is fast becoming vanity of vanities. Dreams enough there are certain to be, and ingenious speculations perhaps to the end of time ; but the chance of their revealing anything beyond the dreamer's idiosyncrasies being insignificantly small, they will excite about as much interest as dreams ordinarily do. Such hypotheses as continue to be tenaciously held in the general renunciation may be destined for transformation into scientific hypotheses, when they must struggle for existence in the way that their successful or unsuccessful forerunners have done.

A notorious instance of this relapse is, I think, the so-called "Spiritualist" movement of the last thirty or forty years. Directly there was the chance of verifying an article of the religious creed, the article seemed suddenly quickened into vitality, and the joyful hopes of resurrection droned over countless corpses to unlistening ears before, came to have a new and serious meaning. So will it be with the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. As speculative hypotheses they have long ceased to exert any real power ; but translated into

empirical forms they are possibly destined to acquire a practical interest, the full value of which may be incalculable. Those who are unmoved by the alleged evidence for the continued existence of the dead, to whom the death of the body means the decease of the "Ego," will come to see that the be-all and end-all is yet not the individual death—for as long as consciousness is a terrestrial fact, the Ego never dies, and therefore any injury done to the social body recoils on the criminal himself. In so far as the future has a better prospect shall I reap more happiness, for the succession of Me's is endless. There is a real metempsychosis, and this may be the truth that ancient mystics have taught in mythical form, but which we are only dimly coming to see.

I conclude, then, that while the utmost liberty of framing hypotheses should be granted, while we should be slow to forbid the entrance of the creatures of imagination into the mind—for we may be entertaining angels unawares—yet in so far as the supposition is unverifiable it is peculiar to the dreamer, its value is only of concern for him. But just as dreams have lost their value as revelations, because they are personal and subjective, so in future the demand will

grow for that which is capable of becoming a common property, for what is truly objective.

The Poet and the Theologian may still for long ply their office, the one singing his dream of the Golden Age, the other telling his mystic story of an Unseen Universe—and to those lashed to the ship of Science these Sirens may bring no harm, but a certain kind of rapture,—but let not the voyager quit his bark for the enticing shore, for the stress of life lies in other regions, and he who listens too long to super-human melodies becomes deaf to the music of human hearts.

HENRY THOMAS BUCKLE.

HENRY THOMAS BUCKLE was born at Lee, in Kent, on the 24th of November, 1821, and was struck down by fever at Damascus on the 29th of May, 1862.

Who was Buckle? That is shortly said. The first, and only, English Historian. For nothing less than that must be said, although the assertion will be heard with surprise by those hitherto unacquainted with his name, and be considered ridiculous by the majority of the conventionally educated. There is, then, something to be made clear, and much to be made good, before the preceding statement can be received as intelligible and undeniable.

What is a Historian? A man who collects accounts of the sayings and doings of his fellow-men? who narrates the more obtrusive events that occur in the course of a people's existence, who records the domestic life of some

privileged potentate, or who describes with painful minuteness the stages of diplomatic intrigue, and expatiates on the pomp and circumstance of some martial reign? This truly is he on whom we are accustomed from very early years to bestow such an appellation, and the product of whose labour we pronounce without the faintest hesitation a *History*.

The History of England, the History of Greece and Rome? What is the kind of thing with which all are familiar? Names of kings and the dates of their accessions, shedding of blood and burning of cities, heroic stand of three hundred men against an army at Thermopylæ, successful march of Hannibal over the Alps (in itself a truly wonderful feat), razing of Carthage to the ground by Scipio, struggles of rival captains for the short-lived glory of being styled "Emperor," laboured proof or disproof that Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots were martyred angels, outgoings and incomings of rival ministers with different shibboleths on their lips, but the same prejudices in their hearts, &c., &c. There is no denying that these and similar matters are extremely interesting. If well told they are entertaining, as good novels are entertaining,

as all thrilling or pathetic incidents, as well-waged contests in whatever sphere, as sudden glory and sudden downfall, delight or appal the mind. Let them be called Annals, Chronicles, Biographies, Government Reports—such they really are—only *not* History.

The shortcomings of this sort of Literature are apparent directly we consider the broad difference between our attitude to the contemporary world and to the Past. In our contemporary world—the world in which we move and have our being—we cannot but look on the movements of mankind *superficially*. Here we are ourselves floating down the stream—our attention is claimed by objects ever new and changing—for the most part we take them as they come, scarcely ever sort them in our memory; or if we attempt to classify and analyze we can make but little way, for to seize the significance of a picture the picture must not be still under the artist's hands, but finished and suspended on the wall. The Past *is* finished. True. But what commonly passes for the History of the Past is *not* the finished picture. And when we have the picture its value for us is not to be found in its brilliant colouring, but in unobtrusive features which

reveal the working of a profound and universal spirit.

To have a good knowledge of History usually means no more than that the brain is crammed with endless details ; but if our object be simply to know concrete Man, the daily newspaper will serve the purpose better. And those who provide the materials for such studies must be assigned no higher place (and I say it in no tone of disparagement) than the special correspondents of the indiscriminating purveyor of current intelligence.

These indefatigable scribes are doing their proper work. It is a work with which we cannot dispense. The historiographer either aspires no higher, or is less impartial. Either, anxious to make an impression, he gives a factitious consequence to a certain group of phenomena, or, taking his humble fellow-worker of the hour as his model, he makes his record of the Past the same motley production as the hastily printed sheet laid on the morning breakfast-table.

In two ways indeed the so-called Historians have erred. They have erred both in saying too little, and in telling too much. The former was the vice of bygone chroniclers, the latter is

likely to be the vice of the on-coming race of professional annalists. Take up some of the older books, and you will find a difficulty in believing it was the same humanity that lived and died in those earlier ages as now. There is plenty of information about *Men*, but very little about *Man*, and one puzzles one's head in vain to conceive how the craze of hero-worship, the utter self-effacement of millions of individuals for the sake of a handful of their fellow-beings, could ever have attained such undisputed and universal sway. Our more modern writers—coming to a little consciousness that the lights and shades have been thrown in with startling abruptness, beginning to perceive at last that the rise and fall of dynasties and the achievements of great captains have not been the only factors in forming Nations—endeavour to fill up the gaps by throwing in every scrap of obtainable information about anything and everybody, so that the student of the future will have to peruse perhaps a dozen stout volumes to know what has happened in as many years.

Now it is the signal merit of Henry Thomas Buckle that he saw clearly (and endeavoured to act up to his light) the futility of both these

procedures. No man ever shirked the labour of preparation for his task less, but the painfully collected hoards of not a few chroniclers of repute he pronounced useless lumber, and the selectiveness which reduced the History of the Past to a few picturesque incidents he deemed even worse. The one burdened the mind without enlightening it; the other made it a distorted mirror of reality.

Why should we care to seriously study the Past? To see how this complex system in which we find ourselves has been shaped, and so to understand of what solidity are the links that hold it together, to perceive what part is due to perennial causes, and to divine in what respects the social bonds may profitably be strengthened. And for this purpose a profusion of concrete details is absolutely useless. What this dignitary said to that dignitary, how many wives this king married, whether the battle was fought twenty miles or twenty miles and a half from —— village, and what positions were occupied by this or that battalion,—nay, even the contents of lengthy and elaborate State papers—help us but little to see our way along the dim road we are about to travel, to tell us whether our domestic system is founded

on a rock, whether the relations of otiose opulence to industrious indigence might be better ordered, what portion of our current morality has been written on manufactured tables of stone, and what on the human heart itself—this and such as this we want to know, and for light on this and such as this the chronicles of repute may be searched in vain.

Buckle's fame rests on his "Introduction to the History of Civilization in England," a work in two large octavo volumes, and a fragment only of the whole work originally contemplated. In a letter to Lord Kintore written in 1853, *i.e.*, four years before his first publication, he says: "You wish me to write a few words upon the object and tendency of that 'History of English Civilization' on which I have been now for some years engaged. It is very difficult to give in two or three lines a clear idea of so extensive a subject. But I may say generally that I have been long convinced that the progress of every people is regulated by principles—or, as they are called, Laws—as regular and as certain as those which govern the physical world. To discover those laws is the object of my work. With a view to this, I propose to take a general survey of the

moral, intellectual, and legislative peculiarities of the great countries of Europe; and I hope to point out the circumstances under which those peculiarities have arisen. This will lead to a perception of certain relations between the various stages through which each people have progressively passed. Of these *general* relations, I intend to make a *particular* application; and, by a careful analysis of the history of England, show how they have regulated our civilization, and how the successive and apparently the arbitrary forms of our opinions, our literature, our laws, and our manners, have naturally grown out of their antecedents.”¹

His first grand idea was to write the “History of Civilization,” but a little sober reflection showed him that this aim was far too vast a one, and accordingly he resolved to limit himself to the “History of Civilization in England,” choosing our own country because he considered that, taken as a whole, Progress here had been least disturbed, had been *normal*.

Although, however, our country seemed to him most typical on the whole—the balance of national faculty and energy being here best

¹ “The Life and Writings of Henry Thomas Buckle,” by Alfred Henry Huth, 1880, vol. i. pp. 63, 64.

preserved,—the Development even of our own Nation he deemed could not be understood without seeing illustrated on a larger scale various phases and tendencies which were in this island only latent or repressed. The complete scheme of the Introduction of his History, and which was to have occupied three or four volumes, is therefore as follows:—

First: Preliminary Remarks on the Conditions of Civilization in General. These are summed up under two heads—the Influence of Physical Nature, and the Mental Powers of Man himself. In Europe, Mind has dominated Nature; outside of Europe, Nature has dominated Mind. Civilization began in those regions where Man was comparatively insignificant in presence of the vast and uncontrollable physical forces. In India, Egypt, Mexico, and Brazil, Man has been practically the creature of Circumstances. In these typical regions of the three great non-European Continents there are gigantic mountains, vast rivers, impenetrable forests, deadly animals, ever-recurring earthquakes, intense heat, accompanied by boundless natural resources—and see what is the outcome. Absence of motive for labour, and perpetual fear. Sub-

sistence being easily obtained, men were content to sit down quietly under their fig-trees, acquired unshakeable habits, and became the easy prey of the few strong or crafty brains ; and where Slavery and Superstition became normal, the only progress that could be exhibited was that which centred round the despotic egotist, or spent itself in frivolous efforts to propitiate the gods.

In Europe, all this is for the most part reversed. Here Nature, though stubborn, is only provocative of Man's energy ; the need of physical exertion reacts on the brain, and the mind ever grows in spite of the efforts of the governing few, or the attempted encroachments of priests. But Civilization is a thing of slow growth even in fortunate Europe and Northern America. In our own country the progress has on the whole been smoothest and surest, but there have been also hostile tendencies at work, and in certain respects we have been eclipsed in the race. One of the retarding influences has been the tendency on the part of Government to control and regulate the people's private concerns. This, which has had its evil effects even in our country before the spirit of industrial self-reliance and political

independence asserted themselves, had an exceedingly baneful effect in France, until at last the Protective Spirit, as Buckle terms it, received its check (one can hardly say its overthrow) in the Great Revolution.

In France this passion for over-regulation was confined to the Political Authority. Notwithstanding the religiosity, as one may so call it, of the French, the Ecclesiastical Power was never able to subdue the desire for intellectual freedom, and we have to turn to the Spanish Peninsula to see the working of that fearful principle of Ecclesiasticism which has cowed both King and People alike. We need not go so far as Spain, however, to see the working of the clerical spirit, and our author passes next to Scotland, to note the curious mixture of religious fanaticism and scanty respect for divine kingly right.

So far he had proceeded in his work when he was laid low in a foreign land; but a third volume was to have followed in which he would have sketched the boldness of speculative inquiry, and ardour in accumulating truths, illustrated by Germany, and the universal diffusion of knowledge exemplified in the United States.

Buckle makes it plain at starting that he is writing the History of *Man*, not the History of *Men*. In this respect I make bold to say he stands alone among English writers. In Germany the same point of view had been seized from the time of the great Kant, but apprehended in too idealistic a fashion. In France there had been the conspicuous example of Auguste Comte and his suggestive predecessors, Montesquieu and Condorcet. But Buckle stands alone among his countrymen in his apprehension of the true scope of History. I have nothing to do with the individual atoms of which Society is composed, he reiterates; I am only concerned with the movement of masses. History is, and should be, the History of *Peoples*, not of distinguished men.

He is the champion of the Democratic Spirit in historical literature. He is ever on the lookout for pervading principles, for the element of regularity in events, not the occasional perturbations. Hence he values Statistics as revealing constant forces that are missed in the detail of concrete facts, and asserts the futility of seeking the clue to the social maze in the deliverances of the private consciousness. If we look merely to conspicuous phenomena we

easily fancy that some original genius, some grand captain or innovating statesman, is responsible for the course of national affairs. This is the error of the imaginative mind, of the mind averse to abstract analysis, or possessed of an exaggerated belief in the efficacy of the personal will. But the genius is the creature rather than the creator of his time. The statesman seems to propel the ship—he merely tacks by adroitly adjusting himself to the blast of popular desire. To concentrate attention upon the so-called governors of mankind, as if they were the real directors of events, is as if we should see in the engine-driver the cause of the movement of the train. The statesman may retard, may shut off the steam—and in Buckle's view that is mostly what he has been concerned in doing,—but here the analogy stops; for the tension of the vapour will at last increase to such a pitch that no regulation of valves will prevent the locomotive from proceeding. And then, when the machine at last moves forward, the huzzas that ascend in honour of the wise and provident engineer are the tribute of deluded and ignorant men, who applaud the sagacity that removes a resistance needlessly applied, and fatuously

maintained till a dire explosion was imminent.

No Government in advance of the People—that is the result of Buckle's wide-ranging observation of political phenomena. He points out that in Spain, for instance, enlightened cliques who have snatched the reins of government for a time have striven to remove the dead weight of the clergy from the popular neck, but no sooner has their day passed than the people have welcomed with acclaim the imposition of the old yoke, and even hailed the renewed stirrings of the odious Inquisition. In our own country there has been a great loosening of the Protective Spirit, but the loosening has not originated with the governing classes. No English statesman, whether styled Conservative or Liberal, has ever yet yielded any reform save to popular pressure, and the best thing that has ever been done by English legislators has been to repeal the previous ill-advised legislation of their predecessors.

There is one item of Buckle's speculative creed which has scandalized even many otherwise sympathetic readers. It is indeed startling at first sight. He asserts that Western Civil-

zation has been owing to the Intellectual and not to the Moral half of Human Nature—that the motor force is due to Knowledge and its diffusion, but that Morals have been always stationary. To understand this paradox two things must be remembered: first, that Buckle is dealing with the progress of the *Nation*, not with that of the individual life; and secondly, that by Morality he means rather Moral *Truths* than Moral *Conduct*. What he asserts is that Social Progress has resulted, not from a higher practical rule of Right, but from the general expansion of the intelligence by all those agencies that redeem men from abject superstition, and facilitate the interchange of progressive minds. And thus understood, the averment can hardly be gainsaid. A rigid, but unenlightened, conscience is the parent of intolerance. The purest good will, incapable of tracing to their remote issues the consequences of its acts, aggravates the misery it is anxious to alleviate. And the friction of mind on mind, the involuntary co-operation necessitated by a complex and eager social life, has knit men more together than the preachings of all the churches.

The “Introduction to the History of Civili-

zation" is not all that Buckle accomplished, although in a literary point of view there is not much else to report. He delivered an important lecture at the Royal Institution on "The Influence of Woman on the Progress of Knowledge," which is an able plea for the legitimacy of the Deductive Method in Scientific Research, a method which he also believed was natural to the feminine mind; and he wrote in *Fraser's Magazine* a lengthy review of Mill's Essay "On Liberty." There is also a posthumous volume of Fragments,¹ the chief of which is a systematic view of the Reign of Elizabeth, under the headings "Political," "Toleration," "Clergy," "Bishops," and which probably formed in substance a projected chapter of the great History.

The Review of Mill's "Liberty" is deserving of special notice, because it was a medium of revealing himself to the world as an uncompromising friend of Individual Freedom. If there was one special point on which our author would admit no qualification, allow of no reservation, it was in regard to the liberty of every man to hold and disseminate the ideas

¹ "Miscellaneous and Posthumous Works of Henry Thomas Buckle." Edited with a Biographical Notice by Helen Taylor. In three volumes. 1872.

he held to be true. No label of "sacred" should screen an opinion from attack, however venerable, and supported by whatever weight of authority. Doubt he regarded as the very condition of progress, and no proposition could be vital that was removed from incessant challenge.

A Note in Mill's book, mentioning the recent prosecution and conviction of a poor Cornish labourer for alleged blasphemy, stirred Buckle to the quick. After investigating the case very thoroughly, he opened his mind upon it in the article just mentioned. After describing some eccentricities of the man, he goes on: "This singular man, who was known by the additional peculiarity of wearing a long beard, wrote upon a gate a few very silly words expressive of his opinion respecting the potato-rot and the Bible, and also of his hatred of Christianity. For this, as well as for using language equally absurd, but which no one was obliged to listen to, and which certainly could influence no one, . . ." ¹ he was sentenced by Sir John Coleridge (the father of the present Lord Chief Justice) to twenty-one months' imprisonment.

Buckle was deeply stirred. For such a

¹ Quoted in Huth's "Life," vol. i. pp. 297-8.

sentence to be pronounced in free England, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was hurling our country back to the Dark Ages; and yet the press was silent, and the victim left to languish in his prison. Not only did Buckle denounce this prosecution in the plainest terms, but he dared to name the man who had passed the sentence. And the reason he gave was this. In the case of an intolerant act committed by a private person we should be tender to the man, although we abhor the deed. But when a wrong is committed in *a public capacity*, by an administrator of the Law itself, then we cannot separate the man from his deed, and the only punishment a judge can receive is to feel the lash of public scorn. For this outspokenness Buckle was forthwith "cut" by a large section of the fashionable world. The press was all against him, and even his nearest friends stigmatized his rebuke as "ungentlemanly." But to my mind this vigorous vindication of the principle of religious toleration, in the face of a society too refined to support a principle when outraged in the person of a poor labourer, is a greater deed than even writing the History of Civilization, and one which shows that the reverence for liberty

which breathes through his writings was no mere deduction of the reason, but sprang from the deepest strain of a noble heart.

The case of Pooley is now well-nigh forgotten, but it would have been almost enough to make even optimist Buckle despair of mankind had he lived to witness twenty-seven years later a similar prosecution, and to hear of another sentence of a year's incarceration for the fictitious crime of Blasphemy¹—even a minister of a “liberal” government refusing to shorten the duration of the punishment by a single hour!

I do not intend to criticise the philosophy of Henry Buckle. There has been plenty of criticism, much bad, some good. His view of Historical Science has been pronounced radically unsound. Historical Science, it is averred, cannot be advanced by the comparative method, by noting the working of social tendencies in their isolation in different countries, and then generalizing laws of Progress. The History of the Social Mind should rather

¹ See “Verbatim Report of the Three Trials for Blasphemy of Messrs. G. W. Foote, W. J. Ramsey, and H. A. Kemp before Mr. Justice North and Common Juries on the 1st and 5th of March, 1883, at the Old Bailey.” (London: Progressive Publishing Company.)

be deduced from laws of Mind, as obtained by the mental philosopher from an analysis of conscious experience. Sociology is deduced Psychology.

"I'll not answer that," as Shylock says. When the rival theory is reduced to fact, it will be time to contrast the success of the methods. No admirer of Buckle would venture to contend that he had leapt at a bound to the solution of the complex problem of Historical Evolution. At least he has this merit—that he has combined, as perhaps no one before him in the same field, the twofold characteristics of the genuine philosopher—marshalling his materials only after the widest survey, and then trying to penetrate to the essential principle they seem to embody.

Again he is declared to be a genuine Fatalist, setting no store by personal effort, and regarding the individual as but the puppet of an iron Destiny. But, although his language may not always have been precise enough, the extent of his thought reached only to this—that Man's action is determined for him by the nature he possesses and the circumstances in which he is placed; and it is yet to be shown that any other view is truer, even that any other view

can render intelligible the march of Human Affairs.

But I turn in conclusion from the thinker to the man, and here surely there is only room for admiration and approval. A man with a considerable inherited fortune, entirely without a college training, sets himself sternly the task for twenty years to do a work which required enormous self-denial, and which he very early suspected he would not live to accomplish. There can be hardly anything more pathetic, and at the same time nobler in literature, than the concluding pages of the third chapter of his last volume. Speaking of the philosophical historian, he says : " Not for him, are those rewards which, in other pursuits, the same energy would have earned ; not for him, the sweets of popular applause ; not for him, the luxury of power ; not for him, a share in the councils of his country ; not for him, a conspicuous and honoured place before the public eye. Albeit conscious of what he could do, he may not compete in the great contest ; he cannot hope to win the prize ; he cannot even enjoy the excitement of the struggle. To him, the arena is closed. His recompense lies within himself, and he must learn to care little for the sympathy

of his fellow-creatures, or for such honours as they are able to bestow. So far from looking for these things, he should rather be prepared for the obloquy which always awaits those, who, by opening up new veins of thought, disturb the prejudices of their contemporaries. While ignorance, and worse than ignorance, is imputed to him, while his motives are misrepresented, and his integrity impeached, while he is accused of denying the value of moral principles, and of attacking the foundation of all religion, as if he were some public enemy, who made it his business to corrupt society, and whose delight it was to see what evil he could do ; while these charges are brought forward, and repeated from mouth to mouth, he must be capable of pursuing in silence the even tenor of his way, without swerving, without pausing, and without stepping from his path to notice the angry outcries which he cannot but hear, and which he is more than human if he does not long to rebuke. . . . And let him toil as he may, the sun and noontide of his life shall pass by, the evening of his days shall overtake him, and he himself have to quit the scene, leaving that unfinished which he had vainly hoped to complete. He may lay the foundation ; it will be for his successors to raise

the edifice. Their hands will give the last touch ; they will reap the glory ; their names will be remembered when he is forgotten. . . ."¹

In Buckle, as in his great contemporary, John Stuart Mill, there was a remarkable development not only of the intellect but of the heart. The main sustainer of the historian's indomitable energy was the love of his mother, and after her death it seemed as if the cords of his own life were snapped. It is passing strange that there are critics who find his pages intellectually cold and unimaginative, for throughout there glows a fervour that betrays the intellect is carried along on a strong tide of feeling. Again, the many-sidedness and sobriety of Buckle's mind are some of his better and also rarer points. His life, as written by Mr. Huth, shows the best qualities of the national character, a sterling common sense, that takes a firm grip of reality, blended however with what is not so common, a passion for knowledge of all kinds, and an invariable toleration for convictions most opposed to his own.

Enfeebled in health, overtasked in body and mind, after the publication of the second

¹ "History of Civilization in England," New Edition, 1873, vol. iii. pp. 187-8.

volume of his history, he undertook a tour to the East, visiting, with the charge of two boys, Egypt, Arabia, and Palestine. That journey is most graphically described by one of his young companions, Mr. Alfred Huth. Although the discomforts were considerable, his eager nature carried him forward from one stage of difficulty to another. He could let nothing slip, his thirst for real personal experience was intense, despite suffering and weakness. This eagerness of spirit cost him his life. He had seen Egypt, Nubia, Arabia, including Petra, Jerusalem, and the places of Bible story, but there was one thing more he must with his own eyes behold—the glories of the approach to the city of Damascus. A few days, and the fever that had been clinging to him sapped the last remnant of his strength. An essentially private life, closed in a private death, cut off from the world that had known and honoured him, save for the two lads who had been his privileged companions.

The work he had done will doubtless be done over again, and done with deeper insight and broader grasp. Knowledge grows, and we have not yet sounded the depths of all philo-

sophy : but these fragmentary efforts of Henry Thomas Buckle will always be prized, even when higher generalizations have been reached, for a genuine love of truth and liberty will never be too common ; and it is this which has endeared him even to those to whom he was a complete stranger, to those who, like the author of the following sonnet, were smitten as by a personal blow when the fatal tidings arrived in the June of 1862.

“ Alas ! again hath Azraël the angel
Been here amongst us on his awful quest,
Hath taken tribute of our first and best,
The peerless champion of Truth’s evangel.
Alas ! once more among the sacred vanguard,
Far onward, slow advancing through the gloom,
Our ears affrighted hear a cry of doom—
‘ The strong right hand hath fallen from the standard.’
To him, a man, was given to see the long
And dark world drama with unclouded eyes
Even as a God. Through centuries of wrong,
And sounding wars, and splendid tyrannies,
He saw the growth of thought august and strong,
The slow advance to mightier destinies.”¹

¹ “ Poems,” by William Frank Smith, 1864.

CREATION AND CRITICISM.

THE term "critical" applied to an exercise of mind admits of readier definition than that of "creative." There would be a general agreement, I think, that the critical faculty means a power of distinguishing, of separating a whole into parts, of discerning the relation of these parts to one another. An act of analysis and a judgment of propriety are implied in all criticism. To see difference where others find only the homogeneous, and to have a clear vision of the appropriate means to reach a certain end, are the attributes of the superior critic. The critic does not do or make ; he pronounces sentence on the fitness and unfitness of Nature's or Man's work, such sentence implying, of course, a reference to a standard, either revealed in intuition or accepted on external authority.

The critic must have something to criticise, and that is implied by the creative faculty, but what exactly the creator does is open to some

doubt. Let us take the simplest case—our Picture of the World. We are apt to imagine that the objects of perception, which chiefly absorb the attention of our waking life, are exhibited to us by some alien Cause ; that we occupy with respect to our world-view the position of spectators in a theatre, the scenery and actors alike appearing and disappearing without an interruption. But this is a delusion. In the presentation of every object there are two factors which may be distinguished, with regard to the one of which we are indeed passive, but in respect of the other active. The bare material elements—the sounds, the colours—are of outward origin ; but eye, ear, and other senses are not enough for the perception of what we are accustomed to regard as the External World.

Our perception of an object contains much more than the sense-impression. If at any moment we cut down our world-picture to these dimensions, it would be an amorphous incoherent mass. On the contrary, the sense-impressions serve but as ^{im}stimulants to our Will to bring out of the stores of memory the traces of former impressions, and to construct an articulated whole, the larger part of which is a

thing of fancy. Do we need to be convinced of this, we have only to consider what goes on in dreams, where clearly we are not the mere spectators of an outspread panorama, but live for a time in an external world of our own creation. Now the dream is related to the waking state only in *degree*, not in *kind*. Stimulations of sense are not altogether wanting, but a very slight stimulation suffices to set the Will at work to construct its pictures; and *communication with our fellow-men being for the time interrupted*, we have no means of separating what is personal to self from what is common to all, the subjective from the objective.

Imagination then, or the fashioning of concrete wholes out of detached sensuous elements, is a primary fact of mental life, and accordingly all men are artists or creators. But the word "artistic" in current speech possesses a more limited sense than this. It is commonly confined to a further exercise of the imagination—a limitation of meaning which has reacted on the interpretation of common experience itself, and made people believe that, while the artist is exposed to all the winds of caprice, they themselves are housed within the four walls of solid fact.

The difference between the Artist and the common man I take to be this. The latter, although really a constructor or creator, possesses what I may call a more conservative organization than the former. Having, although unwittingly, created a Frankenstein, henceforth his Frankenstein *rules him*. Although the External World is the subtle creature of his own Will, he not only comes to believe the External World a datum, independent of the workings of his own mind, but the sense-impressions which constitute its material elements speedily come by repetition to adhere so closely that he cannot afterwards dissociate them. These associations are, however, fluent to the artist. The complex objects of *his* perception readily decompose, and out of these primary perceptions of his experience he produces fresh combinations, which may indeed be so unlike their originals as to seem the outcrops of a sublimer sphere.

A certain contrast, then, appears to hold between the critical and the creative faculty. As compared with the analytic nature of the former, the "creative" faculty is *synthetic*. It *conjoins* what the latter sedulously *disjoins*. But does this contrast amount to opposition? Does not

the artist also decompose or analyse? Assuredly: for otherwise he could not "create." It is the very essence of his function that he takes to pieces the familiar edifices in order to make a castle of enchantment out of the vulgar bricks and mortar. And just as the critic must have the idea of a whole, otherwise how could he judge that the parts were rightly ordered, so the artist has an end to serve, when he handles with such freedom the things of common imagination. Surely when the artist *selects* this and rejects that element, he is performing a critical function. No doubt in the majority of cases he would be unable to assign a motive for his selection, but who shall essay to draw the line between a semi-conscious tact and an explicit reason?

Our artist then, it would seem, must be an unconscious critic. But is there no obverse statement to be made? Must we not also say that the critic is an embryonic artist? I think so. I maintain that all men have the artistic faculty. I would even go so far as to say that, placed in other circumstances, the most matter-of-fact intelligence might blossom into the painter or the poet. Surely in our sleep we sometimes fashion the most wondrous forms,

and there are not a few times in our lives when thought becomes rhythmical, and when a fatal self-distrust alone quenches the rising song. More decisive still is the circumstance that the grandest work of art is not above the comprehension of the commonest mind. Art has its objectivity no less than the world of our waking hours—the test of a true work of genius, as the test of a real world, being the coinciding judgment of many minds. The artist whose works are only valued by the few is the *dreaming* artist.

Between the world of imagination and the world of fact no hard and fast line is to be drawn. I have already pointed out that the actual world is mainly ideal, nevertheless we style it Real. Works of Art are eminently ideal, because we are aware of the shaping impulse, an impulse in whose power the artist feels himself, just as we cannot but see and think according to certain necessary laws. *Why* we are constrained to think a world as if it were not *of* us, but *for* us—that is just the problem. And why the world or the æsthetic product is a Unity, a unity which both artist and common man *find*, and do not consciously supply, is just the enigma of enigmas. But I

maintain that inasmuch as the object seen is one, and the work of the poet is a unity, although the object and the art-product are both constructions out of detached parts, so all minds are of one order, all if you will, "inspired," or obedient to an impulse which blows not where *we* list, but *it* listeth.

With the understanding that the terms point to the analytic and the synthetic habit respectively, I asserted that artist and common man are alike *critical* and *creative*. But while I think it undeniable that we are all endowed with these contrasted faculties, the question may still be raised whether they are capable of equal exercise at the same time, and by the same mind. Can a man be both a great artist and a penetrating critic? Will the habit of analysis not atrophy the synthetic faculty, or the tendency to re-construct common experience not be at the expense of careful study of details?

That any human being, swept along by a powerful impulse, urging him to give shape or utterance to some rare and beautiful Idea of which he is possessed, can adequately estimate the propriety of the several parts that make up the living whole as it takes form, borders doubt-

less almost on the impossible. But the profitable question is, Is the original mind, by its tendency to transcend the actual, incompetent to perform the office of judicial examiner and appraiser? And I am unable to see any let or hindrance to the coexistence of such powers. A man may not indeed be the best judge of his *own* work, for the simple reason that he cannot forget that it is his; but that the true artist should not be able to say what would be a great work when achieved by other men, is not credible.

Shall we conversely affirm that the habit of criticism quenches the creative fire? With more reason; for the habit of reflection is distinctly antagonistic to the exercise of the imagination. Criticism, like other things, has its time and place, and the tendency to be always passing sentence on all that goes on about us is apt to become a moral disease, having as one of its consequences a paralysis of productive power. The critic who makes a profession of criticism, while a very useful policeman of the city of intellect, occupies as negative a function as that needful officer, and simply keeps order, leaving to others the fertile work of developing the spirit of liberty. At

the same time, I see no reason why a cool judgment should not accompany great constructive activity, why the man "of imagination all compact" should not also have the fullest knowledge of the conditions of imagining, and be able not only to make a work of beauty, but to say why it is so.

Does not Experience confirm this? Could not a long list be formed of the names of men remarkable for the exercise of both powers? Who so keen a critic as Plato? Almost carping in his criticism, a born dialectician—and yet what wealth of fancy! how concrete his imagination! Will any one try to persuade us that Shakespeare did not know the difference between good and bad art? Could such nice observation of character, such perfect self-control in "the very whirlwind of passion," have been possible for a mind that had not a deep critical vein? And yet who will deny to Shakespeare profuseness of creative power? flinging off, as he did, one great work after another, almost as if they had been leading articles of a daily newspaper.

The all-sidedness of Goethe will long remain a theme of wonder. Here is a man who can pass from one attitude of mind to its opposite

almost without warning, going straight from the poet's bower to the *hortus-siccus* of the unimpassioned naturalist, now depicting the fine frenzy of a Faust, now expounding the theory of the vertebrate skeleton.

And coming down to nearer times (passing by Wordsworth, who almost seems to discredit my assertion that excessive self-consciousness and lofty fancy cannot be attributes of a single mind), have we not a certain few in whom it is hard to say in which direction lies their greatest strength? I will only name one—Robert Browning—poet in all senses, and yet if ever man was born to be a logic-chopper or motive-hunter, he was ; who, if he had not been impelled to be one of England's greatest poets, might have been—though that may not be high praise with many—its subtlest lawyer.

“*LAON AND CYTHNA*.”

I NOTED recently in a review of *Men of Letters* the astonishing remark *a propos* of Shelley : “ Nowhere in his poems do we meet with the smallest trace of personal *experience*. It would be impossible to tell, from his writings, to what nation or time he belonged, or what his work or profession in life had been.” Of course, such barefaced confessions as “ Peter Bell the Third ” and “ The Tyrant Swellfoot,” or trifles such as the song beginning—

“ Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low ? ”

must be discounted, but the writer’s “ nation or time ” can scarcely be said to be inconspicuous to the reader of “ *Hellas*,” the “ *Ode to Liberty*,” or the “ *Triumph of Life* ; ” and that there is not “ the smallest trace of personal *experience* ” in the whole literary legacy is

one of those supreme oddities that make one sometimes wonder how books of criticism come to be written. The best refutation of so strange an assertion may be derived from that model biography lately published by the Professor of Literature in Dublin University,¹ a work which no student of Shelley can venture to neglect, tracing as it does with loving but impartial hand the stages of his brief but fertile career, noting at every step how closely thought and life were interwoven, and proving, if proof were needed, that in Shelley's poetry we have Shelley's *heart* even in a fuller sense than in the personal, but not always sincere, pages of his great contemporary Byron. This is true not least, with all its generalities, of the poem of "Laon and Cythna; or, the Revolution of the Golden City: a Vision of the Nineteenth Century," presented to the British public in 1818.

The expulsion from Oxford for argued Atheism was indeed an affair some six summers old, but its sting remained. True, it is not the father but the mother from whom the child in the vision is torn, but Chancellor

¹ "The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley," by Edward Dowden, LL.D. In two volumes, 1886.

Eldon's judgment decreeing the removal of the infant offspring from the parent's roof had been delivered the month before the first stanzas were committed to paper. And, although in the Preface it is stated "I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character," the battling with intolerance, the persecution and torture of the hero, had all fallen to the lot of the narrator, to be continued to life's end. The receptive student of Godwin's "*Political Justice*" must first pass through the fires of personal injury before the white heat of a Laon's rage could be attained. It was Shelley's salvation as Man that he did not brood upon his own griefs, that the vision of Beauty was to him a soothing narcotic as it were; but, none the less, no poet that ever lived ever more keenly felt what he wrote, ever more fully desired, like the impetuous Faust, to identify himself with Humanity's weal and woe.

The artistic creation, to which the reader's attention is called, struggled like its author into notice under singular discouragement. It had already passed through the printer's hands when its pledged publisher took alarm at certain of the contents, and preferred an inflexible

demand for instant revision of the displeasing passages. At the close of what now stands as preface occurred these words: "In the personal conduct of my Hero and Heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed, therefore, to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices, that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone which are benevolent or malevolent are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak, was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to the charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own has a tendency to promote. Nothing indeed can be more mischievous, than many actions innocent in themselves, which might bring down upon individuals the bigoted contempt and rage of the multitude."

The "one circumstance intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life" was the love and union of a brother and a sister. This was the *social* enormity: There was another. The poem contained, in the mouth of its hero, denunciations of venerable theological dogmas.

"Men say they have seen God, and heard from God,
Or known from others who have known such things,
And that his will is all our law, a rod
To scourge us into slaves."

Again :

"So he made truce with those who did despise
His cradled Idol, and the sacrifice
Of God to God's own wrath."

The consequence was that Shelley was constrained to soften here and recast there, and "a sister" being changed to "an orphan," "Some Power" substituted for "God," "King of Glory" for "God Almighty," "Joshua" for "Christ," an "Iberian" for a "Christian" priest, propriety was satisfied, and *Laon and Cythna* became, with dubious historical fitness, *The Revolt of Islam*; and as such may now be read by all persons not of too tender years, in whom the love of beautiful language is keen, or who still retain a belief, which seems to be

becoming somewhat rare, that tyrants somewhere sit on thrones propped by lies and gold, and that "the judicial murder of the advocates of liberty" is not quite a thing of the Past.

Political, Social, and Theological creeds and convictions are therefore challenged in this poem, more especially in its original form, and the justice of the indictments I proceed now dispassionately to consider. First, however, I would make a general remark, suggested by the little history of the alteration of the author's original draft. Professor Dowden writes:—"Having woven his web of glittering abstractions around himself, Shelley was insensible to the shock which his glorifying of forbidden love must give to the moral sense of society. Never, perhaps, having lived in the intimacy of one who truly drew spiritual life from the faith of Theism or of Christianity, Shelley could not feel how words, which to him seemed but a protest against prejudice and superstition, would carry pain and sudden shock to hearts that were tender, innocent, and full of devout reverence. It was a blindness of the soul to feel no moral sympathy with those whose intellectual convictions he opposed;"¹ and he

¹ "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 162.

seemingly approves of the publisher's determination to have nothing to do with the work unless a closer conformity with popular conceptions were effected.

I regret not to be able to see with the esteemed biographer in this matter. In the first place the phrase "glorifying of forbidden love" is likely to mislead. Shelley did not intend to "glorify" a proscribed relation of the sexes. The way in which the "little sister" is introduced is anything but emphatic, and I make bold to say that the relation is obtruded so slightly that it is speedily forgotten, and could not occasion to any but a censorious reader a shock worth speaking of. But with regard to the anti-Christian sentiments, there must be an end of all vigorous protest against what are deemed religious errors, if the same attitude of aversion is not to be permitted to the dissenter from the creeds of living men as is allowed to the critic of extinct beliefs. In other words, a clear line of distinction must be drawn between faults of taste and heresies. What is to be deprecated, and in that sense Shelley was not an offender, is the employment of vile and coarse abuse, disgusting ridicule—and between that and the word of scornful

sincerity there is a wide gulf, a gulf which in the interest of the morals of controversy should not be attempted to be bridged. Shelley's mind was far too refined to stoop to scurrility, as it was too elevated to indulge in those voluptuous descriptions that not seldom taint the productions of the literary Pharisee. Apart from all reference to individuals (and above all Shelley's latest biographer), I take leave to remark that now at least in these closing years of the nineteenth century, it is time to have done with what I may term Moral Cant. Shelley certainly was in advance of his time when he dared to set aside theoretical conventions, and ventured upon a fictitious experiment "to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own has a tendency to promote." We need that charity and toleration not less now than seventy years ago, notwithstanding a Mill has eloquently pleaded even for variety of practical experiments in furtherance of the Art of Living. Not suppression but full and free discussion is the condition of Moral as of Political Health, and a creed, however universal and venerable, that cannot stand the breath of hostile criticism, or hostile denun-

ciation, is a creed that confesses its death-hour is at hand.

It is a proof of the changed conditions of Political Life that the drift of this singular Poem, after being stripped of its extravagances, fails so little to move us. A reader of to-day not densely matter-of-fact rises from the perusal æsthetically fascinated, but hardly ethically stimulated. The reason is not difficult to find. In seventy years what shifting has there been of intellectual foundations, what increase of self-knowledge, what crumbling of old authority, what rise of new powers! Eloquence which flushed the faces of our reforming sires leaves us cold, and theories of social improvement which seemed flawless to our forerunners have disclosed fatal rifts.

There is no sentence that more frequently recurs in Godwin's political treatise than that "Government is founded in opinion."¹ *Is?* or *should be?* one naturally asks. Whichever it be, the answer is the same. No Government ever was, will, or can be, founded in "opinion," *i.e.*, a rational state of mind. Clearly not in the

¹ As book i. chap. 6, book ii. chap. 3, book ix. chaps. 1 and 3. The phrase is adopted from Hume, Essay iv., "Of the First Principles of Government," as Godwin indeed acknowledges.

Past, for there is not a Government, which has had more than a mushroom existence, that has not been founded either on sheer force, or on an inextricable mass of desire and deeply-organized feeling. And, if we survey the tendencies of the day as prophetic of the near future, we still find Sentiment and Passion enthroned,—not the cold light of Reason, but the flood of ancient patriotism, the half-animal craving for a greater stock of pleasures, the lust of empire. A man standing calmly by himself may frame a strictly rational rule, and incline to the sovereignty of Reason, but directly you have a Society, bound in innumerable reciprocal offices, yet with consentient aim, intellectual arguments count for next to nothing; and the Power that can weld into unity and wield this force must be a Power that is master of the secret strings of sympathy, and can elicit the common element of a rather inferior vein of emotion, not an exponent of some transcendent ideal.

Godwin should have written "Government is founded in will" [not in opinion]—but, had he enounced that as his central proposition, the system of political perfection he so confidently elaborated would have fallen to the ground.

For directly *will* is seen to be the basis of government, a very slight knowledge of human nature is sufficient to show that the efficient element partakes more largely of the nature of blind energy than clear conception. The enthusiastic belief, however, that the Perception of the True is the author of political peace and concord, is the splendid error that so glorified our noble poet, and made him by so much less a trustworthy guide through the labyrinth of practical affairs as it elevated and sustained his muse.

In Shelley's view Social, Political, and Religious Progress were intertwined. He could not conceive one without the others. And here certainly he was right. Understanding by Social Relations the intercourse of man with man apart from Government, by Political Order the subordination of the parts to the whole with a view to the conservation and progress of the whole, and by Religion the recognition of a Uniting Principle whether found within or above Humanity, experience demonstrates that these three act and react.

In Politics Shelley was more an Anarchist than a believer in the necessity of specific government. His position was the natural

outcome of his amiable faith in the innate virtues of human nature. Man is good at heart, he held. Reach that heart, and what a needless machinery are courts and parliaments! So, too, seems to have thought the cooler Godwin, and so, too, many excellent men scattered over the world in our own day. This is, however, surely to forestall the "Golden Age." One lesson we have fairly learned in these later days is that human beings, with all their extended knowledge and command over physical nature, have still a very large portion of the ape and tiger left in them. It may be a sorrowful fact, but it is no wisdom to ignore it. The "Revolution of the Golden City" proved such a bubble just because it was ignored. To tell people they are all true men and brothers, and should behave accordingly, may be fine ethics and excellent advice—but preaching is, alas! not practice. To hold up to ingenuous youth the typical Human Portrait, "In action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" may be sowing the good seed, but don't too confidently expect your grown man to comport himself like an angel and possess preternatural discernment.

The necessity of government being, however, conceded, the extent of government still remains as a practical question, and here reasons may be offered for all varieties of preference, from the tightest paternal despotism to a practical no-government. William Godwin laid down "Government can have no more than two legitimate purposes, the suppression of injustice against individuals within the community, and the common defence against external invasion."¹ The corollary to this, however, is, *and the country must be extremely small.* That little clause unfortunately is the omission that makes so much of the well-intended writing on political theory futile. "The suppression of injustice against individuals within the community" is a demand seemingly attainable with a very small amount of machinery, but its simplicity is deceptive. For, as the civilized world is now constituted, every single state includes such a plexus of interests that to see that no "injustice" be done needs a host of overseers and precautions. Why, in every little parish there is much detail necessitating government machinery, how much more

¹ "An Enquiry concerning Political Justice," book v. chap. xxii., second edition, 1796, vol. ii. p. 190.

then in a nation of several millions, to say nothing of an aggregate of nations such as the British Empire! At the same time we must not lose sight of the point that Government *is* machinery, and not of the essence of life. To imagine that Government can create spiritual force, even create material wealth, is a delusion. If a Representative Government like our own is nothing but a Nation in Committee, with no conflict of interests between Governor and Governed, still there is nothing but an administrative virtue resident in such a system. The spontaneity and the creative power must come from the individuals themselves in their chosen walks of life, and with their varied moral bias. This is the answer to the *doctrinaires* who in place of No-Government would have All-Government—State Manufactories, State Land - Cultivation, State Invention, State Religion.

Political Government keeps the field clear for social work and the exercise of social duties. It sees to it—and it is a complex task enough—that each member of the Organism has the liberty proportioned to its function. And Political Liberty with Political Duty is one thing, and Social Liberty with Social Duty is another.

If I have seen cause to part from Shelley in his political assumptions, I see reason to approach him in his properly social aspirations.

As the limits of a Nation or Empire enlarge, as the number of those qualified for citizenship increases, so the action of larger and larger masses predominates, and the individual counts continually for less. Contrariwise, outside of the political sphere, in domestic, industrial, and other relations, the claims of the individual assert themselves more strongly, and the welfare not of classes but of each single man and woman becomes, with increasing differentiation of character, of increasing importance. Heretofore the political and moral coercion were identified, and Society as a whole essayed to prescribe how each man should order his private life, as it now defines his legal and civil rights. But this is a despotism against which the heart and conscience of mankind evermore rebels.

His "private life" I say. Will it be denied that there is such a thing as a *private* life? Will it be affirmed that there are no spheres of activity and relations of which Society collectively should take no cognizance? If so, I answer that this is a piece of transcendental extravagance only to be matched by the dogma

of political Anarchism. Domestic, economic, and other ideals undoubtedly there are—for ideal characters and ideal commerce—but to require actual conformity to such ideals in the present, or any conceivably near condition of the world, is as reasonable as to require that the precept of Jesus, "Take no thought for the morrow," and "Turn the other cheek to the smiter," should bar prudent life-insurance, or prevent self-vindication by course of law or arms. That there are Laws of Economics and Laws of Health no one doubts, but the friction of an ever-imperfect world forbids inflexible harmony in the one, as it makes inevitable a swaying from the golden mean in the other. And there are fine realms of moral culture into which no system-worshipper bears any credentials entitling him to intrude, and from which to the end (such is the short-sightedness of frail humanity) the legislator, as the priest, must be stringently excluded.

While, therefore, holding our Poet to have been wholly justified in claiming a large liberty as against a cast-iron social Custom, I must add that the same inaptitude for nice distinctions seems to me to vitiate his pleadings here as leads him astray in his laudation of "divine

equality." There are unconventional and unconventional actions. There are trivial conventions whose abandonment will only cost a smile at a harmless eccentricity. There are conventions of a far more serious kind, sanctioned by long usage, but dependent on environments changed or changing; and though their violation may cost their despisers much, the moral dissident of to-day may represent the normal type of to-morrow. But there are other conventions which have their justification in the essential well-being of the species, and a sentiment which guards the sanctity of such deeply-founded conventions may not lightly be tampered with or reversed.

But Political and Social Liberty are not independent of Religious Belief. When the throne claimed its complete homage, and Custom held to a narrow track its unwilling thralls, there in the world around him Shelley saw the inflexible Priest with his supernatural rules and supernatural sanctions. Throne and Church lent each other mutual support, and both together leagued to repress the current of natural feeling in the private life of men. When Laon and Cythna expire amidst the smoke from the burning pyre—

" One uprose among the multitude,
And said—' The flood of time is rolling on,
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream.

For me the world is grown too void and cold,
Since hope pursues immortal destiny
With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
How Atheists and Republicans can die ! ' ' then suddenly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart, and fell."

"Atheists and Republicans"—such seemed an inseparable association in the mind of Shelley. No King, no God. Emancipation from the tyranny of Personal Law, human and superhuman—such is the word of the Great Revolution. And if by Personal Law be meant the decree of mere Self-Will, a demand for obedience because so it seems good to the Supreme Power—the consequences to the subject of it being totally disregarded—it is a true note, and the watch-word of Social Progress. And it cannot be denied that Theism and Kingship have both been so construed. Has not the "Will of God" been made the foundation of the Moral Law, as the Will of the Sovereign has been made the standard of political duty? Atheism is the denial of the former position as

* Canto xii. 27, 30. In "Revolt of Islam" changed to—

" How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die ;
Tell to your children this ! "

Republicanism is the denial of the latter. Not a Will apart from, above, and over its executors, but a Will in the Evolution of the World, and in the breasts of the actors themselves—that is the Will whose Law is well, and whose necessitated service is also perfect Freedom.

The needed unification of political life led to the demand for a King, a centre round which the forces of association should rally. But when the need had changed, its organ, the King, soon ceased to be the exponent of the people, the brain of the Political Body, but confronted the members as an alien power, had *private* interests, and exploited his subjects for his own personal ends. Similarly the Uniting Spirit of the Cosmos, becoming an Object to crude speculation and imagination, took definite shape, and fronted the World as a Power whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways our ways.

If we were bent upon being literalists, it might be maintained that we had not yet emerged from this cruder way of thinking, for the language habitually used with regard to the Sovereign, and the expressions of Prayers and Litanies, rigidly interpreted, leave room for no other conception. But language, it should never

be forgotten, lends itself very slowly to novel ends of thought and feeling. We use words long after the faith which produced them has vanished. And not only words, but also practical forms are retained, when their original spirit is extinct. The present issue of the Political Evolution in our own nation is a highly curious one. Above the real King (the Political Brain) stands a Living Personality, that possesses no proper spontaneity, but whose sole merit is that it is representative of the Nation's Ideal Unity. To speak of the "Queen's Ministers" is, of course, a mere figure of speech. The actually supreme officer is designated in a roundabout way by the People, and a committee of assistance is appointed by himself. The Nation is truly *self-governing*.

If we pass from these human constructions to the constitution of the Cosmos, and seek for our nineteenth-century God, where shall we find Him? Where is the Brain of the Universe which wields the Vast Organism, and whose mandates are felt to its remotest confines? Truly it is easier to say, Not here—Not there—than Lo here! Lo there! They who render God by an *Anima mundi*, a World-Soul, answer "All in every part," but this is an answer

incomplete, as being anarchichal ; for just as Human Society is a Hierarchy of Persons, whereas Equality is neither actual nor possible, so the Universe is a well-ordered whole, in which there is subordination of Forces and ascending scale of worth. Let those now, who can, believe that here on this smallest planet, circulating round one of numberless similar solar luminaries, is resident the Will on whose decision depends the fate of Stars and Ages ! A fantastic dream if ever such there was ! Are we to believe that there are no other spheres freighted with intellectual life, whose will is also of account in the Vast Aggregate ? And does our Science, elementary as it is, lend any support to the supposition that, if such there be, between them and us and among themselves there is no closely connecting bond, but that it lies with each separate habitable World to shape its own destiny regardless of the rest ?

Without venturing upon vain speculations, we may be content to take our stand upon the prevailing tendency of thought and feeling of our race. Despite the decay of Kingship, the Social Bond has not been growing less close as time has gone on. No doubt we have moved far away from the tribal condition where the

State is an aggregate of homogeneous units, a herd swayed by fear and appetite alone; but while the true individual has emerged, the interdependence of the Race has become so intimate (witness the division of labour and the specialization of functions) that the good or ill of each vibrates through the whole. And though those solemn rites have lost their thrilling power there, and this temple lies in ruin here, the impulse which led to these embodiments is still potent, and the sigh may yet be heard for a church truly Catholic, a Common Faith, a Common Hope.—

Shelley the Brave and Benevolent, Shelley living in a darker time than ours—a time when to proclaim one's whole thought was to incur the peril of a prison cell—living when the people had no lawful organ for the expression of its will, and the accredited minister of Religion only too frequently was Cæsar's echo, and not the poor man's friend—Shelley with his sensitive heart was driven into indignation at the wrongs that were spread before his gaze, and saw everywhere in Church and State—

"The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes."

But this must be said to his eternal honour,

that, though endowed far beyond the common measure with the keenest sense of Beauty and the love of serene science, unlike so many lesser gifted he was prepared to lay his appreciation of the Beautiful and his scholar's wisdom at the service of an actual Humanity, choosing rather to be an outcast from home and power than be untrue to a gleam of his higher light. They who would know his follies and his frailties may readily learn them, for he has paid the price of greatness by a life open to the world; but those errors and those failings cannot darken the truth that he strove to uplift his suffering and desponding fellow-men.

It is Shelley's aspiring and brave spirit that we are called by all that is best in us to prize, not his positive contributions to political, social, and religious system, for he had none to give. A life lived so emotionally fast, closed at barely thirty, could yield little for the fabric of Science; but the Temple of the Spirit is vaster than the Temple of Science, and in that temple young Laon has been named perpetual priest.

ADDENDUM TO "LAON AND CYTHNA."

A friend has communicated to me the two following letters which came into her possession through their bequest to her husband. Being at once highly characteristic of the writer, and germane to the foregoing essay, I offer no apology for printing them in this place.

They are addressed to a lady whose relatives and acquaintances were mostly resident in Bridgewater and its neighbourhood. The verses alluded to were ultimately published by subscription, one of the entries prefixed to the volume being "Mr. P. B. Shelley, 6 copies." The title-page ran "Poems by Janetta Phillips. Oxford, Printed by Collingwood and Co., 1811." Shelley's generous estimate of the author's powers would hardly be endorsed by dispassionate critics of the present day.

I.

FIELD PLACE. *May 16, 1811.*

I address you wholly unacquainted, un-introduced, except through the medium of your exquisite poetry, nor know I any circumstance which can apologize for this breach of etiquette but Mr. Strong having in consequence of the

very different views which we have taken of *religion* declined the slightest communication with me on the subject of your poems. An enthusiastic adorer of genius, I expressed my admiration of the *genius* which I found in the MSS. in question, and I confess should have selected some of those which Mr. S. rejected for publication. I offered to print the MS. at my own expense, as it would make even some balances with my printer. I still solicit that honour. Mr. S. promised that he would deliver the MS. to me for that purpose, as fearing my intention might shock the delicacy of a noble female mind I intended to conceal it entirely; that, however, will now be pardoned, as you see the necessity of the avowal.

On my expulsion from Oxford, as author of a metaphysical pamphlet, Mr. S., very much shocked at my principles, refused further correspondence. I am therefore obliged to address you, as I am still anxious that every power that I have should be devoted to the development of genius, and am conscious that no unprejudiced mind would esteem me more or less for my differing with it on the speculative points of religion. It is perhaps

necessary to state in obviation of any misconception on the subject of my sentiments that the pamphlet which I distributed among the learned questioned the existence of a Deity. In justice to myself I must also declare that a proof of *his* existence, or even the divine mission of Christ, would in no manner alter one idea on the subject of morality.

Your most sincere friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Under cover to

T. Shelley, Esq., M.P.,

Field Place, Horsham, Sussex.

Miss Janetta Philipps.

II.

MADAM,

I confess I was surprised, extremely surprised at the receipt of your letter. Why are we here? What does man exist for? Surely not for his own happiness, but as a more perfect instrument of that of others. This even common morality will tell, for *this* we do not want any theological system, not even the belief of a God, the anticipation of his kingdom. How, then, obligations! Surely one being is not *obliged* to another for a

performance of his duty never the most rigid. If obligation exists it must arise from doing to another an unrequited, unrequitable kindness. But I *should* have a reward, I should feel pleasure in adding to the comforts of genius. What! two rewards for one simple performance of evident duty—my own feelings and obligation from you. This is far too much. — I thought there were some souls which soared above the mean prejudice of the world. I am but a novice in it. I stare about me wondering at the fatuity of its slaves who wilfully destroy their own happiness.—And *pecuniary* obligation! what is there in an acceptance of this political substitute for other things *peculiarly* ignoble? It is the world's opinion. Do you still, then, persist in your resolve, and why? I shall perhaps hear from you again; your letter possibly may contain more briefly the determination of that of to-day. If it *does*, I shall be surprised, but shall feel that I have no longer a right to trespass on the time of a being not *one* of whose opinions coincide with mine.—As you mention Religion, I will say, that my rejection of *revealed* proceeds from my perfect conviction of its insufficiency to the happiness of man—to this source I can trace

murder, war, intòlerance — my rejection of *natural* arises wholly from *reason*. I *once* was an enthusiastic Deist, but never a Christian.

Your sincere

P. B. SHELLEY.

Miss Janetta Philipps.

AN EVOLUTION RHAPSODY.

"THE Hindoos," says Emerson, "in their sacred writings, express the liveliest feeling, both of the essential identity, and of that illusion which they conceive variety to be. The notions, *I am*, and *This is mine*, which influence mankind, are but delusions of the mother of the world. Dispel, O Lord of all creatures! the conceit of knowledge which proceeds from ignorance."¹ The authority of the sacred writings of the Hindoos is not considerable among the western members of the Aryan stock. Not many prayers are put up in Old or New England at least for the dispelling of the fogs of the finite intellect, the mental Brocken mist in which the exaggerated images of apparent reality always front us, turn as we will. Selfhood and Property "delusions of the mother of the world"! Nay, the saving

¹ "The Conduct of Life," ix. *Illusions*.

truth, the rock on which our material and spiritual house is built!

This gulf between the Oriental and the Western consciousness is at first very strange to the mental traveller, and the explanation of the divergence will naturally be conformable to the strength of hereditary prepossessions. The Western mind will, as a rule, only see in such a creed as that of the Hindoo the fatal outcome of the apathy of the Oriental nature—a product of that physical and moral torpor which has borne its practical fruit in a stagnant social system, and a disgraceful submission to the progressive men of other lands. It will seem to it that such a creed is sufficiently disproved by the simple fact that the foot of the European is on the neck of the lethargic Asiatic; that where for ages prevailed a dead uniformity of thought and feeling are now the manifestations of a many-coloured life, a calling forth of latent resources, the stir and bustle due to the introduction of the arts and inventions of a more self-trusting race. Yet a few years, and the rushing tide of a resistless civilization will have swept away the last vestiges of a venerable, but effete, faith. The great temples which have been worn by the

tread of millions of blind worshippers from a time almost antecedent to the annals of history will have become the show places of the profane tourist, and the erewhile dweller of the silent retreat, sacred to a sublime meditation, will wander disconsolate, trying in vain to find a desert home, unheeded and contemned, to fall at last into the long sleep, without the faintest hope of a successor.

The test of worth "by their fruits ye shall know them" is one of those few items of the proverbial philosophy of the imaginative preacher of Nazareth accepted without question by all parties which have at any time claimed the Christian name; and doubtless is an aphorism to be found in other than Christian Bibles. The drawback to such a test of worth, however, is that, like so many other seemingly pregnant practical rules, it is a purely formal dictum failing us when we most need a guide.

By what marks shall the qualities of the fruits by which the good are to be distinguished from the bad trees be recognized? It is assumed that the good fruits are self-evidencing. But what is the meaning of self-evidencing? By agreeableness of taste to A and

B? Nay, but they are gall and wormwood to C and D. By their success and self-propagating capacity? Well, but the success may not outlive the hour of observation, and weeds will thrive on some soil where wholesome plants will wither and die. "Look at our respective fruits" says the Catholic to the Protestant. "Behold your interminable quarrels and uncertainty, leading to aimlessness of purpose, malice and all uncharitableness—and witness our outward harmony and inward peace!" "See," says the prosperous citizen to the altruist reformer, "what a fool's errand you are on. You are undermining social order, and bringing yourself to a garret or a prison. Is not this Great Babylon that we capitalists have built? and the emptyings of the pockets of all your tribe cannot set up a single profitable cotton mill."

The appeal to fruits, then, is dangerous and unsafe, because the verdict is strictly limited by precedents, and the tribunal is already bribed. Notwithstanding its vagueness and insufficiency, however, the criterion must stand, for it is the best we have—taking due care, at the same time, that we limit its application to the province with which we are for the

time concerned. If we only look to reap where we sow, all is well. Error enters when we take a special kind of fruit as a universal certificate to the value of trees in general. That tree does not bear the fruit expected—is it therefore only fit to be hewn down and cast into the fire? Nay, perhaps when we draw our horoscope for a life of millenniums instead of centuries, this despised one will be found to bear the sufficing mark “survival,” the sole infallible, though alas, practically unavailing test of “the fittest.” Forms of civilization come and go. Rome was, London is, and perchance some now insignificant village will hereafter be, the world’s wonder.

Especially is this circumspection required when dealing with the vastest of human interests. The modern European idea of life is a good working doctrine, but its depth is not very great, and though it has enabled Man to control the lower energies of Nature, a time may come when it will no longer answer to the deepest craving of the world’s heart. There are indeed even now tiny cloudlets on the horizon, which seem to presage a torrent of refreshing rain that will irrigate tracks which have borne only stunted plants for many

seasons. These notions of *I am* and *This is mine*, whose practical outcome is the not always beautiful fruit of conceit and self-aggrandizement, may yield to a deeper ideology, whose leading terms will be *We are*, *This is ours*—the watchwords of a Golden Year to which the Present Age, where self-assertion is “the way to glory,” and the fierce competition for private possession the main business of life, may be related as the portico to the interior shrine, as the ugliness of an unfinished building, begun at many different points, to the beauty of the completed work.

We are beginning to read the story of the Earth very differently to our dimmer-eyed ancestors. As it used to be taken for granted that the natural world was once chaos, and gradually settled into order and law, so with respect to the human world it has been assumed that the original state of things was characterized by liberty bordering on license. Each man a complete whole in himself, it was conceived, went his own way in proud self-reliance, until antagonisms born of private greed paved the way for a possible government, and the recognition of the expediency of a system of mutual help. Liberty and inde-

pendence, it was supposed, were the unbought rights of the primitive age, and many longing eyes even gazed back to the dawn of Reason as to the era of perfect individualism and supreme self-satisfaction.

These theories may be now for ever dismissed. The earliest ages, far from being free and lawless, were marked by a social tyranny such as the lightest despotism of the Mediæval Church never equalled. Not merely was Man then a more abject slave to the basest fears in respect of the physical forces, but he feared the eye of his fellow more intensely than the most conventional Philistine of the nineteenth century. The minute prescriptions and troublesome ceremonies which excite the amazement, and kindle the wrath, of the civilized traveller in barbarous regions—the least forgetfulness of which is punished with the greatest severity—may serve to show how awful must have been the social despotism in primitive times. The truth, indeed, is that the unity of Humanity was so close that the contrast between a member of the society and the society as a whole was quite unrealized, and *meum* and *tuum* were unknown because everything was the possession of all. Rights and Duties are of

modern date, and such terms have no place in very ancient vocabularies, being the product of a long succession of ages of corporate disintegration.

The question which it naturally occurs to us to ask is—Is the present order of things, such as we know it now in the West, destined to be ultimate? The idea of Self is full-grown. The rights of private property are thoroughly secured. Is the actual social model to be the pattern for all after-times? I answer, No. Existence is of the nature of a cycle. Man ends as he begins—almost, not quite. He begins in the diffused consciousness of childhood; he ends in the impersonal wisdom of old age. Mankind started on its career in a condition wherein the parts were so intimately connected, that the Tribe presented the unity which now is exhibited in the Individual. The members of the social body swayed to and fro unconsciously, like the leaves of a mighty tree driven by a resistless wind. And as Man began, so will he end. The Individual will be merged in the whole—there will be one thought, one feeling. The strife of Egoism and Altruism will one day be unknown, for they will be sublated in a higher unity, which

will render the conscious contrast of Self and Not Self inapplicable.

Compared with such a state, our present condition appears mean and cramped. Ours is not the Modern, but the Mediæval period of History. And as the ancient world knew us not, so we are unable to realize fully that remote future. The past is becoming exceedingly difficult to picture wherein Obligation and Personality were unconceived ideas, and these are so essential to our present condition that we cannot fancy a future wherein they are unknown.

But although the remote future be unimaginable, the forces which are at work have but to be carefully scrutinized, and they will be seen to suggest the tending towards such a state of things. The individuality into which we have emerged after such protracted and severe efforts we are already beginning to lose again. Do we not hear in these calls for co-operative industry, in these demands for institutions open to the people at large—national museums, public gardens, free libraries—the note of a new Communism? Not the old Communism wherein no man owned conscious possession of life and limb, wherein a stern unwritten law compelled

an unwilling egoism to contribute its quota to a common fund ; but a new Communism, where each man voluntarily consents to be a wheel in a vast machine for saving to the utmost the processes of production and distribution, and cheerfully brings his mite to the public treasury to receive infinitely more than its value back, but in a form which forbids appropriation.

If we are content to wait, the much-debated question of Socialism will settle itself. There is no occasion to agitate for any vast social changes, to attempt schemes of radical improvement on the older order. Such schemes, born of good intention and indiscreet zeal, may temporarily succeed, but will always collapse, however fair be their promise. Man has emerged too completely out of the infantile condition in which property was unknown, because self-hood was unknown. To go back to that kind of Communism would be like supposing the highly differentiated animal to revert to the vague protoplasm of the Protozoon. No paper schemes like those which have immortalized the names of St. Simon and Fourier, or transient experiments like those of New Lanark, or fraternal alliances destined by the very beauty of their promise to be short-

lived, as the religious communes of the New World, will ever profoundly influence the course of human affairs. However real the ills thus sought to be obviated, however well-considered the plans, they come upon the existing order *ab extra*; and History has demonstrated over and over again that no plant grows to maturity in this world that has not its root in soil elaborated by a long past. Such Utopias are destined to be only dreams. The evolution of Humanity is not ideal, but real. Our theories of social order must by the nature of the case always be after-thoughts, not fore-thoughts—*i.e.*, they must be the realization of tendencies which have the force of Ages at their back.

The error which has vitiated so much excellent practical effort, which has made legislation often like the vain weaving of a Penelope-web, is the idea that conscious volition has the world in its keeping. The rationalists from Plato to the latest Benthamite, with all their sublime visions and noble aspirations, have accomplished so little because they have made the fatal mistake of thinking that the world was governed by pure reason. The philosophers can never understand why, in spite of all their

flawless reasonings, the multitudes are still so deaf and blind as not to go the way they would have them go. But the multitudes are wiser than the ideal philosophers, albeit their vision is *in* them, not *of* them. The multitudes are participant of a deeper wisdom—not because they have set their wits to work to find out the truth of things, but because they have not attempted to reverse the natural hierarchy, and exalted the finite intellect over the head of the racial impulses. Let the Understanding know its place—its office is critical, not constructive. It may smooth the path when it is discerned, it cannot find the path itself. Did the Understanding ever acquire this supremacy over Impulse, did the recognition of Personality, with all its train of rights, ever lead men to think that Individualism was the true goal of history, then farewell to progress, farewell to the human concert.

This, indeed, is the source of the alarm felt by so many thoughtful men at the present day, who, catching sight of the danger, but unable to see the self-regulating mechanism which is at work, rush headlong to the conclusion that salvation is to be found in the restoration of some effete despotism. But there is no cause for

alarm, simply because this world is so constructed that the intellect can only weigh and estimate, but cannot lead. Any one must be a poor observer of human nature who can long harbour the idea that Man, either private or social, is driven by reason. How many votes in Parliament are gained by the most faultless of arguments in the most protracted of debates? How many among the thousands who throng the churches every seventh day are changed in the least particular by the lavish display of pulpit logic? Is it not notorious that the worst public speaker is he whose argumentative blows are dealt with the greatest precision, but just fail to reach the heart? The audience may assent, but will not be swayed. Of all appeals one would say *a priori* that the one which should have the most effect would be that to self-interest; but no line of argument ever falls more flat. Each single man in a public assembly may have a keen eye to his private interests, may make them the law for his business actions; but in the public room the only interest which is uppermost is the interest of all, at the lowest a class-interest, not unfrequently something much broader than that.

So in human progress as a whole. The egoistic tendencies are swamped by the claims of the social organism. However desirous each individual as a solitary struggler might be to ignore the well-being of others, the well-being of others is forced upon his attention, and what is more, his egoism is undermined by the needs of a social state, when least he imagines it. The greatest stickler for private property at the present time is an unwitting contributor to its abolition. The man who goes to a "store" because he can get things cheaper than at a private shop; the dissatisfied householder who is anxious that Government should purchase the rights of private companies, that the supply of water to his house may be improved; the advocates of free schools—are all by small steps contributing towards a condition of things where a system of rating all round will purchase the benefits of a social state at the lowest cost. The supports of the *ancien régime* are being removed so gently, that the British individualist who foams at the mouth at the mention of Social Democracy and Communism will wake up one fine morning and find himself the necessary, but thankful, member of a community in which independent enterprise and working one's

own capital will be regarded as little short of madness.

What are the forces, then, at work bringing about these vast results? No other than *the blind impulses and inertia of the masses*. A short-sighted philanthropy would dam up these forces, would check these impulses by making men so rational and prudential that each would be able to revolve on his own pivot. But they who would transfer the power from impulse to reason "know not what they" would "do." The permanent reign of comfort and sufficiency means the enthronement of the spirit of Self-love, and the arrest of the noblest growths of our humanity. Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" For "have riches" read *are self-satisfied*, and the saying will not be found obsolete.

Why do I say this? Because in the present state of the world I distrust the unselfish impulses of the supremely prudential man. I do not believe disinterested action is a creation of the will. It is the child of necessity, and the faculty of sympathizing with others is born of personal pain. None are less sympathetic than those whose lives have run smoothly. Let

a few generations succeed each other of consummate prudentialists, and the very flower of human nature, the willingness to spend and be spent for fellow-beings, will never come to maturity.

And so we come round to the "Maja" of which mention was made at the outset. So many rational reforms are futile, because in chasing the shadow they miss the substance. Their promoters confuse *good things* with *good*, imagine that outward quiet and material plenty mean inward satisfaction and richness of the inner man. Even translated into terms of happiness "good" may be missed, for the satisfaction may be of such a kind that it only increases the hunger and makes the void more keenly felt. Or if the happiness seem sufficing, mayhap it is only so because the soul it fills is too contracted to hold more. Hence we rightly deprecate a creed which tends to limit the range of human sympathy, and which sets up the end of a consciousness of a series of realized pleasures rather than the end of attained and abiding Peace; since it is a fact not to be ignored that the growth of the world is through pain, and as far as we can see alone possible through pain.

Does it not seem as if the empirical optimist were "hoist with his own petard"? Conscious being is better than non-being, you say, and a happy conscious being is the *summum bonum*. Well then, if so, be thankful for all the evil you have got, and all that there is yet in store. You are grateful that a world has been evolved—do not put the idle question, then, why should there be evil? The sleeping monad knows no pain. It has not tasted either the bliss or pangs of conscious life. The first glimmer of feeling is the perception of a contrast, and with every deepening of capacity deepens contrast.

This is only a riddle to him who makes our present phase of consciousness the universal measure. It is only a "mystery" to the individualist. The Oriental, who holds *I am* and *This is mine* to be "delusions of the mother of the world," sees in states of pain and pleasure but transition to the last solemn phase—the great Nirvana, where self-consciousness is extinguished, but all is supremely Well. So we here are journeying to our earthly Nirvana, where the thought of *I am* and *This is mine* will be lost in a social consciousness, where self-consciousness is relatively extin-

guished, where nought is left but the corporate consciousness—the common feeling which is as much above the consciousness of self, as individual consciousness is above the vague sentiency of the lowest of organic creatures.

In my view, then, we of this present age occupy about the central point of history, that point where the tide is nearly on the turn—the tide of a sea whose waves flowed in foaming and turbid, but will return peaceful and flooded with light. To drop metaphor, we (or rather the van of our race) are nearing the period when Individual Liberty will have attained its consummation. In Politics, in Religion, the battle has been fought and won : it only remains for Domestic independence to be gained, for freedom to be accorded to Woman to do what work she will, for the last remnant of enforced life-servitude to be abolished, and the goal of Individualism is reached. The immorality of marriage-bonds, that have ceased to be other than outward fetters, is already recognized, and the chains are not yet struck off simply because the social interests at stake are so vital that it is questioned if free affection can bear the whole strain of duty. But, if it shall appear, as I believe it will more and

more, that the chief sufferers are to be found amongst those whose altruistic instincts are strongest—that the bonds do not fetter now, and never have fettered, the determined egotist, but simply cause the waste of energies which otherwise would have gone to the service of Humanity — Society will renounce a tyranny as foolish as it is unjust.

If this period be not distant, and I cannot believe it is, then the Individual will be fully emancipated, and the last world-era will be entered upon. The cementing forces, which have never ceased to act, will do their work with accelerated speed. For, as I hold, there is an established harmony between open-eyed individualism and the need of its abrogation. At the very moment when man, if he were left to his own devices, might seek to set up as an independent unit, the external pressure becomes so intense that his individual welfare drives him into greater reliance on his fellows. At that very moment, when all external hindrances have been removed for free walking, when he has eyes to see and the power to choose his way, at that very moment Destiny forces him to use crutches, to implore the assistance of his neighbour's arm.

Such is the Irony of Fate—call it rather the Providence within and above all law. We need not blink the word if we denude it of its personal implications. Providence there is none, if by Providence we mean a vast controlling ultra-mundane Mind, analogous to the human; but if by Providence we mean a resistless tendency towards a Unity which we have reason to believe is Origin as well as Goal, the term is as good as most in our transcendental vocabulary.

There may seem, indeed, a contradiction in this notion to the feeling of personal liberty, as if it lay in Man's power to make or mar the universal plan. But this is another off-shoot of that rationalistic tree which has been condemned by its fruits. If all men at this moment were to become thoroughly independent and thoroughly self-willed, if they were to hold a vast congress, and were to agree to go their several ways, proclaiming a Rule of Universal Egoism, I grant the notion of Providence would be in evil case. But though such an event may be framed by our vagrant minds as a mental picture, it is clearly a practical impossibility—impossible now, and impossible for ever. For the conditions essential to its

happening presuppose a stage of development in which the idea, still less the desire, of a social disintegration so profound could not arise.

What alone finally remains to the individual is the power to fill his own soul and the souls of his comrades with joy or sadness. He can resign himself to be constrained by the sympathies and spiritual attractions which are playing around him, or he can rebelliously defy these subtle potencies, and be chastened with whips into a reluctant obedience. To this conclusion are steadily converging an inductive philosophy of sober experience, and a philosophy born of prophetic insight. "Man," says an old writer, "must thus let go, must surrender his proper self-hood. Individuality is mere accident, a nothing; put off this nothing, and all creatures are one. Work for the sake of working, love for love's sake."

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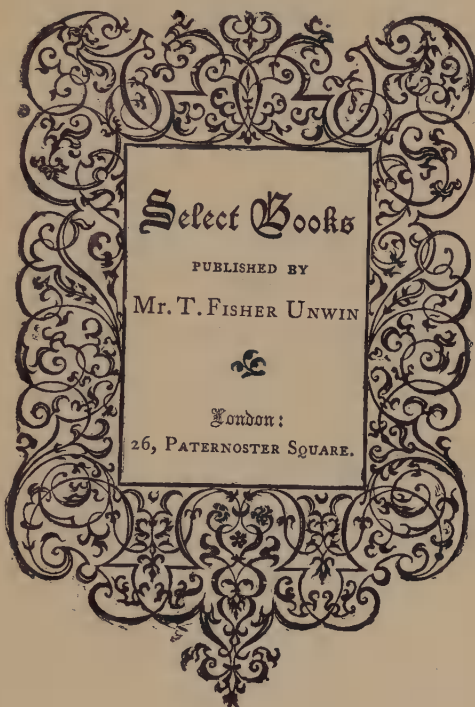
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